

## Is the Fethullah Gülen movement overstretching itself? A Turkish religious community as a national and international player

Seufert, Günter

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and Security Affairs

*Günter Seufert*

## Is the Fethullah Gülen Movement Overstretching Itself?

A Turkish Religious Community as a National  
and International Player

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Stiftung Wissenschaft  
und Politik  
German Institute  
for International  
and Security Affairs

Ludwigkirchplatz 3-4  
10719 Berlin  
Germany  
Phone +49 30 880 07-0  
Fax +49 30 880 07-100  
[www.swp-berlin.org](http://www.swp-berlin.org)  
[swp@swp-berlin.org](mailto:swp@swp-berlin.org)

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*Dr. Günter Seufert is a Senior Associate in SWP's EU External Relations Division*

**Is the Fethullah Gülen Movement  
Overstretching Itself?  
A Turkish Religious Community as a National and  
International Player**

The movement led by Turkish preacher Fethullah Gülen divides opinions in Germany as forcefully as perhaps no other. The Gülen movement is simultaneously regarded as the fastest-growing religious trend among citizens with Turkish backgrounds in Western European countries, including Germany, where approximately 300 organisations close to Gülen operate 24 state-approved private schools and around 150 extracurricular tuition centres. Officially, Islamic instruction is not provided at any of these establishments. Graduates of these schools form a new – in socio moral terms – conservative educational elite which is deeply committed to founding further educational institutions and seeks to establish ties with political and administrative bodies and the general public in the process.

In Turkey, Gülen's supporters currently form the largest group of non-governmentally organised followers of Islam. Opinions of the movement within Turkey also differ widely. Secularists and Kurdish nationalists impute to it a totalitarian slant allegedly based on a blend of conservative Islam and ethnic Turkish nationalism, and accuse it of infiltrating state bureaucracy, particularly the police force and the judiciary. Fethullah Gülen himself has lived in the USA since 1999, a fact which, for some in Turkey, is sufficient proof that he and his supporters defend US interests. By contrast, some liberals are convinced that the movement's most conspicuous trait constitutes its origins in mainstream Turkish society, while concomitantly representing a modernist Islamic religious current which reconciles religion with the market economy and parliamentarianism.

Why does the general public in both Turkey and Germany find it so difficult to assess the movement in a more balanced manner? How is it possible to judge the religious character of a movement that does not present itself as a religious actor in public but is led by an Islamic scholar? How should the religious and political bias of a movement whose idol expresses both orthodox and reformist sentiments and who represents both Turkish nationalist and internationalist positions be interpreted and appraised? What unifies a move-

ment which professes to be nothing more than a series of independent education authorities, media holdings, companies and trade associations, all of which feel motivated and addressed by Gülen's tenets? And how do Gülen's supporters themselves contribute to the deep mistrust with which they are continually confronted?

On the one hand, Gülen's followers emanate from different societal groups governed by sometimes anti-theoretical political, social and economic constraints to act.

There is, for example, a *schooling and educational movement*, which aims to create moral, religiously committed individuals educated simultaneously in line with modern standards. Many in Turkey deem the movement's schools based abroad, which exceed 140, as ambassadors to the country and mediators of Turkish culture, which is why the educational movement not only exhibits Sunni Muslim but also strong Turkish national traits. In addition, the movement operates an unknown number of *cultural centres dedicated to inter-faith dialogue*. This branch of the movement is particularly vocal in European countries and in the USA, where it uses these activities to garner much of its positive image. All these endeavours are financed by *Turkish entrepreneurs, frequently of Anatolian origin*, who have formed a parent organisation in Turkey under the acronym TUSKON (Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists). TUSKON avoids adopting a specific political ideology, its statements paint a conflict-free picture of Turkish society, and it deliberately refrains from participating in day-to-day political discussions. The political involvement of *the cliques within Turkish bureaucracy* which form the fourth strand of the movement, particularly in the police force and the judiciary, makes them the target for quite different judgements.

Secondly, the way in which the Gülen movement is viewed depends in large part on the respective observers' political context and the norms to which they subscribe. It follows that Turkish nationalist attitudes are generally judged more positively in Turkey itself than in European countries hosting Turkish immigrants. Conversely, Fethullah Gülen's political convictions, including his belief in the compatibility of Islam and democracy, elicit less approving nods in Turkey than they do in the USA, for example. This is because, in the eyes of Turkey's predominantly Muslim society, which has been living within a secular political framework for ninety years, Gülen's position constitutes a mere reflection of their daily lives. To the

US public, however, this type of stance quickly makes its exponent a moderniser of Islam.

In Turkey, the movement's chief significance lies in its contribution to the development of a morally conservative counter-elite which is proving instrumental in superseding the secular Republic's Europe-oriented, yet authoritarian elite. This process is being accomplished in part via educational work among the conservative classes. However, the Turkish bureaucracy and judiciary, site of merciless turf wars, proves another receptive arena. In the USA, the movement has established itself as a Muslim alternative to Islamism with a readiness to engage in dialogue, earning it benevolent acceptance by influential political circles. In Germany and other countries receiving Turkish immigrants, the movement is the only Turkish-Muslim organisation which does not focus primarily on politics of recognition in regard to Islam. As is the case elsewhere, it avoids lobbying for the building of mosques and the introduction of Islamic religious instruction, concentrating instead on the transfer of secular knowledge which a Muslim educational elite is required to bring forth. However, this secularisation of action goes hand in hand with a powerful internalisation of religious norms and values. The Gülen movement's declared purpose, then, is commensurable with the "Inner Mission" in Germany, those charitable, Christian organisations and initiatives back in the age of industrialisation, whose social commitment was nurtured by religious awareness and simultaneously directed at strengthening religious identity.

Which of these two dynamic strands of the Gülen movement will retain the upper hand in Germany, and how should the Federal Republic's state and society react to the movement's activities?

# The Development of the Fethullah-Gülen Movement in Turkey

## Fethullah Gülen and His Movement in the Context of Turkish Political Development to 1999

The son of an imam, Fethullah Gülen was (officially)<sup>1</sup> born on 27th April 1941 in Eastern Anatolia in the village of Pasinler in the Erzurum province. In 1959, Gülen himself became an imam and preacher for the Presidency of Religious Affairs (DİB), which sent him to the city of Edirne on the Turkish-Bulgarian border. In 1962, during his military service, Gülen was accused of sedition in the city of İskenderun as a result of his preaching unofficial sermons, although the proceedings were later dropped. After completing military service, Gülen returned to Erzurum temporarily. There, he participated in the foundation of the local branch of the Association for the Struggle against Communism (KMD), a highly nationalist organisation allegedly controlled by the Turkish and American intelligence agencies during the Cold War.<sup>2</sup> During the same period, Gülen was also involved in the local community centre (HE), a partially state-controlled cultural organisation established during the administration of the Kemalist Republican People's Party (CHP).

In 1964, Gülen resumed his activities as an imam and preacher in Edirne. He began to give lectures to a small group of followers in one of the city's mosques. A convincing orator, he rapidly made a name for himself. Gülen was transferred to the metropolis of İzmir, where he was appointed preacher for the Turkish Aegean region, an office which enabled him to engage in extended preaching and lecture tours. During these years, the first residential communities peopled by Gülen's followers were established.

## Gülen's stance on the 1980 Turkish coup d'état

On 12th March 1971, the Turkish military interrupted the parliamentary political process for the second time in the history of the Republic.<sup>3</sup> The officers who spearheaded the coup d'état justified their actions by citing the danger of "reactionary religious activities", among other things. Fethullah Gülen was among those arrested. He was accused of "exploiting religious feelings for self-serving political ends". Nevertheless, Gülen subsequently succeeded in drawing positive benefits from the military intervention: "Many left-wing leaders received their comeuppance. Muslims were usually only arrested in order to maintain a type of balance [between the persecution of left- and right-wing factions]." <sup>4</sup> Gülen was found guilty but swiftly released during a subsequent amnesty. He resumed preaching as early as February 1972. The number of his followers grew, and, in 1978, the Ak Yazılı foundation was established in İzmir under his influence, which still exists today. In 1979, the inaugural issue of the magazine *Sızıntı*, for which Gülen penned the editorials, was published. The first revision courses influenced by Gülen's teaching and designed to prepare grammar school pupils for the central university entrance examination were developed in the same period.

In the early seventies, Islamic factions in Turkey formed their first political party. Necmettin Erbakan's National Salvation Party (MSP) propagated the creation of a powerful, independent Turkey whose task it was to protect the Muslim peoples from the West and lead it in the struggle against the same, as the Ottoman Empire before it. At the 1973 parliamentary elections, the MSP spontaneously won 11.8 per cent of the votes. Although this figure slipped back to 6.4 per cent during the next elections in 1977, the idea that Islam offered a viable political alternative had effectively established itself. Radical groups no longer considered Turkey as a "country of Islam" (*dar ul-Islam*) instead

1 Date of register entry. According to Gülen's official website, the actual year of birth was 1938, <http://tr.fgulen.com/content/view/3502/128/> (accessed 13 December 2012).

2 As stated by political theorist Ahmet İnsel in Human Rights Foundation of Turkey, *Report 1998* (Istanbul, 1998), 56–58.

3 The first coup d'état, in 1960, ousted the right-wing conservative Democratic Party (DP) from power.

4 Quoted in the daily newspaper *Hürriyet*, 3 April 1998, <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster//haber.aspx?id=12660&yazarid=6> (accessed 21 November 2013).



branding it a “country of war” (*dar ul-harb*) as a result of its secular political system.

During this dispute, Fethullah Gülen aligned itself with the ruling system and opposed the direct politicisation of Islam. The Muslims’ chief task lay not in the fight against a secular state, but in its own ethical and moral renewal. In 1977, the Presidency of Religious Affairs provided Gülen with an opportunity to preach in two of Istanbul’s main mosques. The then prime minister Süleyman Demirel and his foreign minister Sabri Çağlayangil were the most prominent members of the congregation.

When the generals staged a coup against Demirel’s government three years later, on 12th September 1980, Gülen followed the line established by the leaders of the coup.<sup>5</sup>

In the editorial of the October 1980 issue of his magazine *Sızıntı*, directly following the coup d’état, Fethullah Gülen described Anatolia as “the final guard” against the [corrupt] mentality of the crusaders, the Jesuits and also against the poison of lust, alcohol and Western philosophies and ideologies.<sup>6</sup> Anatolia’s abilities are based on the unswervingly “nationalist-religious spirit” of its population. However, Gülen went on, the Kemalists had estranged themselves from the Muslim Turks. According to Gülen, the military intervention would halt this process, which is why it would constitute the largest, most important victory by Muslim Turks in their entire history. Gülen concludes his article with an attempt to legitimise his own movement in the eyes of the military. He writes: “In order to free the [religious-] national body from the cancerous ulcer which has been consuming it for years, a more deeply grounded movement that comes from the bottom of the heart is needed.”<sup>7</sup>

In the ensuing seventeen years, Gülen’s endorsement of the coup d’état enabled his movement to enjoy a relatively large degree of impunity as far as monitoring by secular powers was concerned. Between 1986 and 1997, it even received the active support of the respective secular governments. Gülen’s current critics view his stance in those days as a genuine ex-

pression of his political position, and believe that the more liberal opinions he voices today are mere dissemblance.

### Gülen’s early political vision

Despite his political opposition to Necmettin Erbakan, Gülen’s world view in the 1980s and 90s differed only very slightly from that of his Islamist adversary and the latter’s party. Gülen and Erbakan shared a rejection of westernisation and all related social norms and lifestyles, the condemnation of “Westernisers” in their own country, the glorification of the Ottoman Empire as a major Turkish-Muslim power and vanguard of the Islamic world, hostility towards non-Muslims, particularly Christians, the premise that the Turkish nation is unimaginable without Islam, with all the accompanying political extrapolations of this concept of a Nation of Religion and – perhaps most significant – the idea that the Muslim Turks must be subject to ethical and moral renewal. This latter conviction went hand in hand with the repudiation of all notions of individual freedom and religious and cultural pluralism, which naturally included fundamental, and thus also political, equality.<sup>8</sup>

By contrast, what separated Gülen from Erbakan and more radical groups at the time was,

1. The idea that the Republican State was primarily an instrument of repression which had to be opposed. Gülen rejected the rhetorically exaggerated alternative propagated by the radical Islamists that Turkey could either be a “country of Islam” governed by Muslims, or a “country of war”, in which Muslims were repressed. He described Turkey as a “country of service” (*dar ül-hizmet*), in which Muslims were required to work for Muslims and contribute to an increase in Muslim morality.<sup>9</sup> He believed that the State itself was too important to be opposed or even destroyed;<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The fact that Gülen’s official website glosses over his justification of the coup d’état, presenting him exclusively as one of its victims, tallies with the image of him the movement wishes to convey today, <http://tr.fgulen.com/content/view/3502/128/> (accessed 13 December 2012).

<sup>6</sup> [Fethullah Gülen], “The Final Guard” (Turkish), *Sızıntı*, October 1980, <http://www.sizinti.com.tr/konular/ayrinti/son-karakol.html> (accessed 21 November 2013).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Yavuz Çobanoğlu, *The Goal of a “Golden Generation”: Society, State, Morality and Authority According to Fethullah Gülen* (Turkish), (Istanbul, 2012), 233–300.

<sup>9</sup> Bekim Agai, *Between Network and Discourse: The Educational Network Surrounding Fethullah Gülen (born 1938): The Flexible Implementation of Modern Islamic Thought* (German), Bonner Islamstudien, vol. 2 (Schenefeld, 2004), 140.

<sup>10</sup> “So do you have another State? Do not destroy the State you have before you have prepared its alternative”, said Gülen in a quote published in the daily newspaper *Sabah* on 26 January 1995.

2. The idea that the conquest of the State by an Islamist party and the modification of its institutions (system of government and laws) would be sufficient to make Islam the dominating societal force. Instead, Gülen emphasised how imperative it would be to train an elite with the intellectual capacity to govern the State and survive in the face of Western competition, and which, furthermore, would require an ethical and moral grounding sufficient to withstand Western temptations;

3. The idea that a transition of power could only be achieved with the support of the population in elections or public actions and that, in order to create this support, it would be necessary to respond to the demands of the devout electorate. Gülen did not participate in the debate regarding the stronger or weaker presence of Islam in public life, nor on discussions concerning the headscarf, the pilgrimage or the state schools for the training of preachers, with the result that secular circles ceased to regard him as a threat to their Europeanised lifestyles. This led to the opinion, more widespread then than now, that the Gülen movement was an essentially non-political trend.<sup>11</sup>

However, Gülen's fundamental convictions at that time not only overlapped considerably with those of the Islamist movement. They were also largely consistent with the state cultural and educational policies implemented in the wake of the coup d'état under the rule of the generals, which became known as the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis.<sup>12</sup>

At the time, the coup's instigators actually adopted significant elements of Gülen's and Erbakan's thinking, a fact which only appears paradoxical at first glance. In order to counter the increasing politicisation of young people and the influence of right- and, even more so, left-wing belief systems, concomitantly fencing in political Islam, the generals integrated religion within Republican ideology as a further identity-establishing element the latter. This process can be described as Kemalism in Islamic guise, and found expression in a raft of measures, ranging from the revision of school books on history and civic education and the restructuring of state institutions for language and historical policies to the introduction of obligatory religious education in schools and the pro-

liferation of theological university faculties. During the course of the State's ideological realignment, the Gülen movement became the civil society equivalent of state policy almost by default; certainly by no effort of its own. Like the State, the Gülen supporters represented a combination of national-religious sentiment and socio-moral conservatism, and were committed to the creation of a strong state, while simultaneously opposing the party-political organisation of political Islam.

The broad parallels between his world view and the new state ideology, and his concurrent renunciation of opposition explain why, unlike other religious activists, Fethullah Gülen retained a large degree of impunity in the wake of the coup d'état, and his followers were able to continue their activities. The removal of around 100 of Gülen's disciples from the police service in 1982 did not compromise this unofficial collaboration. In the ensuing years, Gülen, evidently enjoying the favour of state authorities, preached in all the major mosques in Istanbul, in Ankara, Izmir and in his home city of Erzurum.

### **The appeal and practicality of the Gülen movement for the State in the 1980s and 90s**

However, Fethullah Gülen's influence and popularity in Turkey did not reach its peak until the first half of the nineties.

In terms of domestic politics, this was due to the renewed growth of the Islamist movement, this time in the shape of the Welfare Party (RP), once again under the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan. During the local elections in 1994, the Welfare Party won nineteen per cent of the vote, capturing the city halls of Istanbul, Ankara and a series of other cities with up to a twenty-five per cent share. The party emerged victorious at the subsequent parliamentary elections in December 1995, winning over twenty-one per cent of the vote. After months of wrangling over the formation of the government, party chairman Erbakan was appointed to lead the resultant two-party coalition as Prime Minister in 1996. The "Islamist threat" which some feared would dawn with this development made Gülen, the champion of an ostensible non-political, alternative Islam, a central figure in the public discourse on religion and state legitimacy.

In the early nineties, new, foreign policy-related spheres of activity became accessible to Ankara with the emergence of new independent states in the

<sup>11</sup> Cf. here Ömer Laçiner, "Community Politics" (Turkish), *Birikim* 282 (October 2012): 19–25.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Binnaz Toprak, "Religion as a State Ideology in a Laicist State: The Turkish-Islamic Synthesis" (German), *Zeitschrift für Türkeistudien* 2, no. 1 (1989): 55–62.

Balkans and Central Asia. For Turkey, relatively unprepared for these developments, the Gülen network's private schools proved the most effective instruments of foreign cultural and educational policy. Gülen founded his first schools based abroad with the support of the Turkish State, or, more precisely, the General Directorate for Services for Education Abroad, part of the Ministry of National Education (MEB).<sup>13</sup> Years later, a magazine sympathetic to the movement, *Aksiyon*, published a report on the personal involvement of the then Prime Minister Turgut Özal (died April 1993) in the schools inspired by Fethullah Gülen in the Balkans and in the Turk republics of the former Soviet Union.<sup>14</sup>

This placed Fethullah Gülen at the centre of domestic and foreign political challenges for the Turkish State. He maintained close ties with top-level politicians including Turgut Özal, founder of the Motherland Party (ANAP) and who, from 1983–1989 and 1989–1993, held the offices of Prime Minister and President respectively, Tansu Çiller, Chairwoman of the True Path Party (DYP) and Prime Minister, and even Bülent Ecevit, Chairman of the Democratic Left Party (DSP) and four-time Prime Minister, who had a reputation as a strictly secular politician. In 1994, Fethullah Gülen made the opening speech on the occasion of the establishment of the Journalists and Writers Foundation (GYV), designed as a vehicle to convey his political ideas to those social circles whose self-definition was not primarily religious via large-scale public symposia and other events. In 1997, Gülen began to make contact with Christian churches, and initiated the first interfaith dialogues. He had an audience with Pope John Paul II in February 1998 within the context of these activities.

However, Gülen and his movement were ostracised when the military leadership deemed that the Islamic revival, promoted in part by the policies of the generals since 1980, had reached alarming levels and that it was time to launch an uncompromising strike on Erbakan's party and considerably restrict the scope of the Islamic civil society. At the National Security Council meeting on 28th February 1997, the military staff agreed on a coordinated legal, bureaucratic and media campaign which resulted in the resignation of the

Erbakan government in June 1997 and the ban on his party in January 1998.

Gülen had always voiced his opposition to Erbakan's policies and, unlike the latter, denied that it was a woman's absolute religious duty to wear a headscarf, for example.<sup>15</sup> After the aforementioned National Security Council meeting with its far-reaching consequences, Gülen pledged his support for the demands ultimately issued to the Erbakan government by the military.<sup>16</sup> Among other things, the generals demanded a restriction on the training of imams and preachers, the removal of religious activists from public service, a cap on the funding of religious activities by the private sector and the transfer of private schools run by religious authorities to the State. In public, Gülen supported all these military orders, although they were, in part, directed against the schools and foundations his followers had established.

Nevertheless, with the Welfare Party's removal from power Gülen lost his central domestic political function for the ruling elite, and he came under increasing public pressure. On 23rd December 1997, Gülen felt compelled to offer to hand over 300 private schools run by his supporters in Turkey and abroad to the Ministry of Education. In June 1999, a press campaign was initiated against him in which real or falsified recordings of his sermons were used, resulting in charges being brought against him. However, Gülen had already travelled to the USA for medical treatment on 31st March 1999, where he subsequently took up residence and still remains.

The previous year, the Journalists and Writers Foundation (GYV) had started to organise political symposia, operating under the name the "Abant Platform". These events can be interpreted as the quasi civil society response by the Gülen movement to its political situation at that time. It was initially concerned with the defence of Muslims' religious freedom within the Secularist State. The symposia placed this question at the centre of the general discussion on human rights and rule of law in Turkey. Later conferences focused on other topics, including the situation of minorities and societal pluralism.

13 Agai, *Between Network and Discourse* (see note 9), 156.

14 Weekly magazine *Aksiyon*, edition of 16 April 2007, <http://www.aksiyon.com.tr/aksiyon/haber-18411-26-ozal-bu-okullar-orta-asyanin-gelecegi.html> (accessed 21 November 2013).

15 He voiced this opinion for the first time in an interview with Ertuğrul Özkök in the *Hürriyet* on 23 January 1995, see official Gülen website <http://tr.fgulen.com/content/view/2257/5/> (accessed 13 December 2012).

16 Agai, *Between Network and Discourse* (see note 9), 160f.

## Fethullah Gülen and His Movement within the Religious Context of Turkey

Fethullah Gülen's contribution to Islamic theology has been the subject of enthusiastic appraisals.<sup>17</sup> However, he is no reform theologian who represents views on the understanding of the Koran, the words of the Prophet (*hadith*) or his actions (*sunnah*), which lie outside the orthodox Turkish mainstream. Gülen has also exercised no influence on Turkish reform theologians who approach the Koran from a hermeneutic or historical-critical perspective.<sup>18</sup> In some respects, such as the question of the position of women, for example, he lags behind the stance adopted by the Turkish State Presidency of Religious Affairs. Gülen supports the Koranic precept according to which testimony given by women in court is allegedly worth only half of that provided by men,<sup>19</sup> while the theologians working for the State religious authorities explain their interpretation of the relevant passage, which deviates from its precise wording, by arguing that this phrasing is characteristic of the time of the Koran's revelation and can thus only claim relative authority.<sup>20</sup>

### The influence of the Nakşibendiye Order

From a theological perspective, Gülen is part of the tradition of the Nakşibendiye (Nahqshbandiya) Order, which dates back to Bahaddin Naqshband (1317–1384). Unlike other mystical fraternities, the Nakşibendiye espouses neither the humility and unworldliness of the *fakir*, nor the relativisation of Koranic norms and laws in the name of an direct recognition of the Divine.<sup>21</sup> The Nakşibendiye's fundamental characteristic is the fear of a gradual dwindling of divine

guidance. The Order's doctrines are based on the premise that the Muslim community has been in continual decline since its virtually perfect original state at the time of the Prophet.

According to the Order, the spiritual downfall should be mitigated by four attitudes or precepts: firstly, by strict observance of the Koranic rules, secondly, by the renunciation of an individual search for God, to be replaced by active efforts to maintain the social community's, or society's ethical-moral order, thirdly, by the conviction that God sends the Muslims a reviver of the faith each century, and, fourthly, by the intellectual exercise of being aware of the Creator's presence at all times, and the continual willingness to recognise the reflection of divine action in the world as we perceive it.<sup>22</sup>

Where Fethullah Gülen's religious views become socially relevant, the stances he adopts read like a modernised version of these four principles of Nakşibendi doctrine.

Initially, then, Gülen rejects all metaphorical interpretation of the Koran and the relativisation of its rules. He cleaves, instead, to the direct validity of the Koranic text – as in his position on the issue of women's rights.<sup>23</sup> Secondly, like the Nakşibendiye Order, Gülen also negates the possibility of believers taking an individual path to an understanding of God. In his view, belief is fulfilled primarily by active work for the preservation of the community's socio-moral order. Just as the ritual precepts (ritual prayer, pilgrimage, charity etc.) are non-negotiable religious duties, Gülen also believes that maintaining the well-being of not only the family, but also of the community, constitutes a religious obligation. In Gülen's eyes, "Islam is at the heart of a future society whose norms and moral concepts are prescribed by religion, in the name of which those with the requisite authority advocate benevolence and prevent malevolence."<sup>24</sup> Thirdly, within this framework, the moral community controls the individual, and the individual achieves divine salvation via his or her active dedication to the other members of the same community. Against the background of the above mentioned rejection of an in-

17 See, for example, Thomas Michel: "It [Gülen's theology] may well prove in the long run to be the area of his deepest and most enduring influence", Thomas Michel, "The Theological Dimension of the Thought of M. Fethullah Gülen", in *Mapping the Gülen Movement. A Multidimensional Approach*, ed. Gürkan Çelik (Amsterdam, 2010), 57.

18 Cf. Felix Körner, *Old Text – New Context: Koran Hermeneutics in Contemporary Turkey* (German), (Freiburg i. Br., 2006).

19 Yavuz Çobanoğlu, "A Movement without a Female Archetype" (Turkish), *Birikim*, 282 (October 2012): 77–84, here 81.

20 Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı (DİB, Presidency of Religious Affairs), *Final Declaration by the First Consultative Assembly on Daily Religious Problems* (Turkish) (Ankara, 18 May 2002).

21 Şerif Mardin, "The Nakşibendiye Order in Turkish History", in *Islam in Modern Turkey*, ed. Richard Tapper (London, 1991), 121–44, here 123.

22 Ibid., 123ff.

23 Paradoxically, this is also recognised by those who present Gülen as a reform theologian: "The emphasis that Gülen places on Qur'an and sunna underlines the 'orthodox' nature of Gülen's teaching and the community's practice", Michel, "The Theological Dimension of the Thought of M. Fethullah Gülen" (see note 17), 59.

24 Çobanoğlu, *The Goal of a "Golden Generation"* (see note 8), 72.

dividual quest for God lies the rejection of individual lifestyles. The more homogeneous a community, the stronger it is. Individualism is, by contrast, the first step towards the weakening of that community.<sup>25</sup> In his writings penned in Turkey, Gülen refers to his followers as “recruits”, as “soldiers not in shape, but in spirit”, and as a “cavalry of light” against the darkness.<sup>26</sup> The teaching’s adepts are required to submit voluntarily to the spiritual leader. This leader is Gülen himself.<sup>27</sup> The fourth noteworthy feature of the Nakşibendiye principles, namely the continual realisation of God and the contemplation of the world as a direct mirror of divine action, is the part of the teachings which has undergone the most radical change within the context of its adaptation to the modern age. This significant acceleration of the doctrine’s modernisation can be attributed not to Fethullah Gülen, but to Said-i Nursi (also Said-i Kurdi = the Kurdish Said), who lived between 1876 and 1960 and was venerated by his followers as “The Wonder of the Age” (Bediüzzaman).<sup>28</sup>

### The influence of Said-i Nursi

The age in which Nursi created his theological canon was marked by the rigid secularisation policies of the Kemalist regime. The transfer of religious knowledge, traditions and practices was subject to numerous restrictions, and a new secular elite, trained at European (or Europeanised) universities regarded the religious wisdom with contempt. The Nakşibendiye Order’s traditional endeavours to uphold the community’s morals receded into the background during the Nursi era, as, for him, the future of religion itself was at stake. Scientific principles had spawned new ideologies such as materialism, positivism and Darwinism, whose patterns of thinking and explanation threatened to deprive religion of its role as interpreter of the world.

In the light of this, Nursi applied the Nakşibendiye’s mental exercise of becoming aware of the Creator’s presence by viewing the world as a reflection of

his actions to natural phenomena. In this way, he attempted to integrate the results of modern science into a conception of the world. He divided creation into things immediately observable by the naked eye (nature as it appears to us) on the one hand and, on the other, an underlying divine design, whose inner structure included all natural objects and determined their functionality.<sup>29</sup> He believed that this divine design can be studied by exploring nature. Nursi used an allegory to describe nature as the second divine book which, like the Koran, delivered insights into the Creator. With this, the study and exploration of nature became a religious duty.

Said-i Nursi’s writings initiated a completely new movement among Turkish Muslims. Study groups reminiscent of Bible study groups, which sought to understand the Koran anew in the light of modern science with the aid of Nursi’s writings, sprang up all over the country. Steeled by this type of religious argumentation, the next generation was able to open itself to the sciences and the secular school system without endangering its beliefs.

Nursi also broke new ground in a political sense. He was one of the few religious scholars of his time to view constitutionalism and its associated ideas of participatory and democratic rule as being compatible with Islam.<sup>30</sup> In 1909, Nursi welcomed the reinstatement of the Ottoman Constitution, and, when the election victory by the Democratic Party (DP) in 1950 signalled the irrevocable end of the era of one-party rule and tentative steps towards democratisation were taken, Nursi sent the new State President Celal Bayar a congratulatory telegram. Even after the religious leader’s death, his followers continued to support the parties of the Central Right, which they deemed the sole alternatives to the secularist-nationalist and State-oriented Republican People’s Party (CHP), thus upholding Nursi’s commitment to democratic forms of government. Nursi’s political stance also proposed a perspective of Christianity as a religion equally threatened by secularisation, an innovative notion for Turkish Muslims which provided them with a new outlook on “the West” as a whole. Nursi differentiated

<sup>25</sup> Kıvanç Koçak, “Gülen and Totalitarianism: Authoritarianism, Military Order and Discipline” (Turkish), *Birikim* 282 (October 2012): 49.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 5.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Cemalettin Canlı, “A Delicate Connection: Nurism and Fethullah Gülen” (Turkish), *Birikim* 282 (October 2012): 89ff.

<sup>28</sup> Regarding Nursi’s biography, cf. Şükran Vahide, “The Life and Times of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi”, *The Muslim World* 89, no. 3–4 (July–October 1999): 208–44.

<sup>29</sup> Şerif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany, NY, 1989), 213. With this, Nursi became the first Muslim to develop a concrete conception of what is now known as *intelligent design*.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Yusuf Tekin and Birol Akgün, “The Historical Development of the Islamists’ Relationship with Democracy” (Turkish), in *Political Intellectual History of Modern Turkey*, vol. 6: *Islamism* (Turkish), (Istanbul, 2004), 652–63.

between a positive and a negative Europe, drawing the line between the two in accordance with the space accorded to religion within the European states. As this was largely dependent on the form of government, he viewed countries with parliamentary rule as potential allies, and the Eastern bloc states, by contrast, as representatives of the “negative” Europe. Nursi described Christians who shared his opposition to materialism and Communism as “Muslim-Christians”.<sup>31</sup>

In all aspects of the Gülen movement recognised as positive by the German and international public, Fethullah Gülen stands on Nursi’s shoulders. Nursi created the intellectual rationale for the compatibility of Islam with modern sciences. Departing from the then Muslim mainstream, he endorsed the religious justification of participatory and democratic forms of government. He broke down the strict fraternal structure typical of that era, instead creating an open, yet effective organisational form in the shape of his study groups. Moreover, he was the first person to draw attention to a possible synchronisation of the interests of Christians and Muslims in their rivalry with secular or secularist explanatory models of the world.

However, Gülen initially adopted these progressive, unorthodox elements of Nursi’s thought only hesitantly and without referring to the latter directly.<sup>32</sup> He repeatedly repudiated the label Nurcu (Nurist) when applied to himself.<sup>33</sup> And even when his followers later invoked Nursi, this occurred only in a very general manner and without giving explicit credence to Nursi’s ideas. In the daily life of Gülen’s companions, the latter’s writings eclipse the canon of Nursi, the “Risale-i Nur”, or “Treatises of the Light”.

Gülen’s reluctance to commit to Nursi is understandable, as, although he adopts the latter’s “method”, he modifies the thrust of the latter’s activities.

On a social, societal and political level, Nursi was concerned with promoting solidarity amongst his readership and community of disciples in a period of continual persecutions, prohibitions, confiscation of written works, arbitrary arrests and numerous show trials. Nursi was preoccupied with the continued existence of religion. Fethullah Gülen, on the other hand, has set himself the task of restoring Muslim ethics and morals and accumulating sufficient backing for his

vision of a Muslim society. His chief concern is not the continuance of religion, but instead the grooming of a devout elite intended to function as the main tool in the construction of a new society.

Nursi had not only experienced the authoritarian rule of the earlier Republic, but also witnessed the severe crises which gripped state and society in the Ottoman Empire. He was fully aware of the weakness of the Empire and its institutions, which is precisely why he directed his hopes at political freedom and progress. By contrast, Gülen joins the contemporary Muslim-conservative mainstream in idealising the Ottoman Empire.

Nursi, the Kurd who experienced the early Republic’s Turkish nationalist agenda, together with its secularism, as repressive, not only championed liberal forms of government, but also, unlike the Turkish nationalists, sought orientation in line with the guiding principle of Ummah, the transnational community of Muslims.<sup>34</sup> For Gülen, on the other hand, the Turk born long afterwards, who spent his formative years in the nationalist climate of the early Turkey, the concept of “nation” forms an integral part of his view of Islam. Following the ultra-ideologised Turkish History Thesis, taught in the early Republic, Gülen establishes as a fact the superiority of Turkish culture and, with this, Turkish Islam over forms of Islam practised by other nations.<sup>35</sup> At times, in fact, the impression is created that, for Gülen, religion is there to serve the nation and that the latter is by no means deemed one of several political forms of organisation. In his early writings, Gülen expressed open hostility towards all those who, in his opinion, posed a threat to the inner unity of state and nation, primarily the Kurds and Kurdish-speaking Alevis.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Hakan M. Yavuz, “The Assassination of Collective Memory: The Case of Turkey”, *The Muslim World* 89, no. 3–4 (July–October 1999): 193–207, here 195.

<sup>35</sup> This is also conceded by pro-Gülen academics. However, they attempt to place a positive slant on it, cf. Doğu Ergil, “Anatomy of the Gülen Philosophy and Movement”, in *Mapping the Gülen Movement*, ed. Çelik (see note 17), here 23–25.

<sup>36</sup> During these years, Gülen avoided the designation “Kurds”. In the new edition of the writings of Said-i Nursi, which are published by companies close to Gülen, the terms “Kurds” and “Kurdistan” are replaced by “Easterners”, “the East” and “eastern provinces”. Gülen describes Kurdish-speaking Alevis as the descendants of merely superficially islamised Armenians and Assyrians whose beliefs do not constitute an authentic religion; see Ayşe Hür in the daily newspaper *Taraf* of 11 December 2011.

<sup>31</sup> Ergün Yıldırım, *The New Players in the New Turkey: The AKP and the Gülen Community* (Turkish), (Istanbul, 2011), 198.

<sup>32</sup> Canlı, “A Delicate Connection” (see note 27), 87–91.

<sup>33</sup> Agai, *Between Network and Discourse* (see note 9), 157.

## **The Fethullah Gülen Movement in the Context of Turkey's Socio-structural Development**

Although the manner in which the Fethullah Gülen movement, its emergence and evolution, are entangled within Turkey's political development and the interpretation of its religious foundations elucidates the network's political and religious orientation, it does not explain the movement's exponential growth in the last twenty years. And, despite the fact that its toleration by the military government in the early 1980s, nurturing by the secular governments in the 1990s and subsequent cooperation with the AKP (Justice and Development Party) in the following decade aided its expansion considerably, this does not account for the dynamic it has developed. That said, however, it is indeed the political sphere which holds the key to explaining the movement's success. The Fethullah Gülen movement grew in parallel with the visibility of Islam in politics, i.e. the success of Islamist parties such as the MSP, RP, FP (Virtue Party), SP (Felicity Party) and, later on, the Muslim-conservative AKP.

At the time of the Republic's foundation in 1923, less than ten per cent of the population lived in cities. Today, this figure has risen to almost eighty per cent. The imposition of a Western lifestyle and the marginalisation of religion by the Kemalist elite created a deep cultural divide between the rural population and the urban middle classes, which was made manifest in virtually all aspects of everyday life, ranging from dress to linguistic usage, daily routine and political loyalties. The rather radical attitude espoused by the Islamist movement in the seventies, eighties and nineties was a response to the social marginalisation of their supporters, chief among whom, in the seventies, were inhabitants of underdeveloped provinces and, in the nineties, those who had fled the countryside to settle in the major metropolises. People turned against the secular Republic, demanded an economy without a system of interest, the withdrawal from NATO and even toyed with the idea of founding an Islamic State. By contrast, the current situation is characterised by the integration of social climbers from these classes (now in the majority in the fast-growing cities) within educational institutions, the State bureaucracy, the economy and politics.

For ever-expanding sections of society, then, this social upheaval effectively equated Fethullah Gülen's decision to focus his efforts on raising the education level of the devout population as opposed to the organisation of religious life and carrying out political

work against the Republic with a functional orientation for the life plan of these individuals. In contemporary Turkey, large social groups are faced with the task of reconciling their traditional religious identity with the challenges posed by new living environments. Teachers and students within the educational network, their sponsors – predominantly entrepreneurs from Anatolia – and civil servants from the lower and/or provincial classes discover in Gülen's teachings a strategy which allows them to expand their professional and social milieus and yet remain Muslims at the same time. Still more, Gülen's beliefs allow them all to combine their personal educational success and increased social status with their faith and the interests of their nation in a legitimate manner.

With this, the Gülen movement marks a provisional hiatus in the Republic's far-reaching socio-structural reorganisation. However, this not only applies to the latter, but also to the current ruling party AKP, which, in many respects, constitutes the political counterpart of the civil society-based Gülen movement.

### **Social and political parallels with today's ruling party**

Both forces, the AKP and the Gülen movement, testify to the fact that a Muslim middle and upper class has emerged or is in the process of emerging, which no longer seeks political confrontation with the Kemalist state, but desires instead to integrate its followers within existing state-based and economic structures, gradually reconstructing state and society in the process. They both have confidence in the economic dynamics unleashed by the Muslim-conservative population, and the ruling party and the Gülen group can now lean on a newly-created Muslim entrepreneurship as a result. Both powers have spawned their own educational elites, albeit to differing degrees, whereby the AKP relies more heavily on the old explicitly Islamist cadres. The world view espoused by both movements combines Muslim ethics and morality with Turkish-national sentiment, while their discourse is characterised by an awareness of Turkey's innate strength, and both share the vision of expanding their country's influence in the region and worldwide. Additionally, both entrust Turkey with a mission to be carried out in the entire region and far beyond its borders, namely acting as a counterweight to a Western influence, however interpreted, be this in terms of geopolitics (the AKP) or on the level of ethical-moral values and

social ideals (the Gülen community). At the same time, the two organisations exemplify the sheer mutability of the religious, social-conservative milieu.

However, the activities of the Gülen movement are not limited to the preparation of the faithful for modernity in the form of secular education and to bolstering their Muslim identity via service to the Muslim-Turkish community. Gülen and his followers simultaneously see themselves as the upholders of conservative ethics and morality. This facet of the movement triggers criticism and concerns among its opponents, because the aim of asserting conservative moral ideals is concurrently stated as an Islamic command and prerequisite for the nation, and thus expressed to the individual in an almost totalitarian manner, for Gülen's minions an aspect which gives the movement even more appeal.

The disintegration of traditional social structures during the course of urbanisation results in the loss of both the protective and punitive collective of the village, the self-contained district and the non-industrial guilds. As a result, individuals lack direct social control in their new environment, and are simultaneously confronted by phenomena including alcohol abuse, neglect, crime and "loose morals", which they experience as anomie, lawlessness and social fragmentation. In the eyes of those who subscribe to a traditional morality, the strengthening of moral rules and the consolidation of religious awareness are synonymous concepts. As a new community of believers based on voluntary action, the Gülen movement and its institutions resume the erstwhile direct social control, which, coupled with a strengthening of faith, is designed to provoke the internalisation of ethical-moral norms and approaches. In the sense that it seeks to stabilise morality and religious commitment in the face of a modernisation-induced crisis, the Gülen movement recalls the re-Christianisation movement in Germany in the era of the Industrial Revolution, whose name says it all: Inner Mission.<sup>37</sup>

This reveals a further parallel between the Fethullah Gülen movement and the current ruling party. Even its chairman, Prime Minister Erdoğan, is concerned that Turkey's young generation could grow up to be too secular. As a result, one of the central goals of the Erdoğan government is to raise a "devout

youth",<sup>38</sup> and it has aligned teaching in state schools accordingly. The AKP also views the moral state of society as a whole as problematic, and attempts to counteract the trend of "depravation" it perceives in public life via a manipulation of educational, cultural, media and fiscal policies. The party veils its dedication to this issue beneath the motto of "service" to the nation, employing the same term for this (*hizmet*) as the Gülen movement.<sup>39</sup>

The fact that the Fethullah Gülen community, like the AKP, enjoys such a high degree of popularity thus reflects the most important pan-societal trend in contemporary Turkey, a trend which exists independently of the movement and would find expression in a civil society and political sense even if the Fethullah Gülen movement did not exist in its present form.

## The Fethullah Gülen Movement and Turkey's Current Domestic Policy

### The government's struggle against military intervention

A distinction between "the government" and "the State" was long upheld in Turkish discussions regarding domestic policy. This differentiation established itself with the demise of the one-party system in 1950, when the Democratic Party (DP) won a landslide election victory and banished the Republican People's Party (CHP), dominant until that time, to the ranks of the opposition. However, the military, bureaucratic and economic elite, the majority of university professors and the judiciary continued to lend the CHP their support. This power bloc was dubbed "the State" by the public and media alike. Until the 2000s, the central right governments supported by the majority of the population were always governments at the mercy of this "State". In 1960, 1971 and 1980, the military intervened, each time forcing right-wing conservative governments to resign. In 1997, the military remained in its barracks, but nonetheless subjected Necmettin Erbakan's Islamist government to such a degree of political pressure that it was forced to throw in the towel a few months later.

<sup>38</sup> News website *Haber Türk*, 1 February 2012, <http://www.haberturk.com/gundem/haber/711672-dindar-bir-genclik-yetistirmek-istiyoruz> (accessed 1 February 2012).

<sup>39</sup> Tanıl Bora, "'Service' as Actor and Activity within the Ideological Discourse of Gülenism" (Turkish), *Birikim*, 282 (October 2012): 36.

<sup>37</sup> On the Inner Mission, cf. Thomas Olk and Rolf G. Heinze, "The Bureaucratisation of Benevolence: the Example of the History and Development of the 'Inner Mission'" (German), in Christoph Sachße and Florian Tennstedt, *Jahrbuch der Sozialarbeit* 4 (Reinbek, 1981): 233–71.



Immediately after the AKP took office in 2002, groups of officers in the general staff resumed preparations for an intervention which was, however, delayed repeatedly. On 27 April 2007, the general staff published a memorandum with which it wished to prevent the election of the then foreign minister Abdullah Gül to State President. Just two days later, the constitutional court annulled Gül's formal election by the parliament. On 14 March 2008, the public prosecutor at the court of cassation initiated legal proceedings concerning a ban on the AKP, which had succeeded in increasing its share of the vote to almost 47 per cent during early elections in June of the previous year.<sup>40</sup>

The raid on an illegal weapons stockpile by the police on 12 June 2007 was the starting shot for the government's counter-offensive. In several waves, criminals and nationalists prepared to resort to violence were initially arrested, who had been used by military circles for undercover operations. Next, it was the turn of NGOs and journalists close to the military, followed by the subsequent detention of former, and then active lower-ranking officers. Finally, high-ranking former generals and officers in active service and the former chief of staff himself were arraigned when the military's public image had already suffered serious damage. In all cases, those concerned were accused of planning to overthrow the government and of masterminding terror attacks in preparation for the same. The criminal proceedings were styled the Ergenekon trials and held within the framework of anti-terror legislation.

Using a vast arsenal of measures, which included the revelation of countless classified military documents regarding planned coups d'état and undercover actions, continuous waves of arrests, thousands of pages of endlessly rambling indictments and court proceedings which dragged on for years and which necessitated the construction of a purpose-built penal institution with integrated hearing rooms on the outskirts of Istanbul, the government succeeded in intimidating the military and putting it in its place so that a coup could be largely excluded for the first time in Turkey's history.

The trial which had the most far-reaching consequences for the military was the one instigated against former and active officers and nicknamed

"sledge hammer" (Balyoz). A total of 365 people, the majority members of the military, were indicted. 250 of these were remanded in custody during the trial. In September 2012, prison sentences of between 16 and 20 years were handed down against 297 defendants at first instance, including eleven former four-star generals.<sup>41</sup> In October 2013, the court of cassation unanimously confirmed the large majority of the convictions.

This occurred despite the fact that the evidence used was peppered with material errors which suggest the subsequent fabrication of incriminating documents.<sup>42</sup> The decision by the court of cassation to penalise the mere act of preparing a criminal offence, i.e. the drawing up of plans to stage coups and terrorist attacks which precedes any concrete attempts at the same, also met with criticism.<sup>43</sup> However, more seriously, the indictments for the various trials allege, or fabricate, the existence of a terrorist organisation (known as Ergenekon). This not only resulted in a vast number of independent actions and offences by various groups and individuals of a similar persuasion being treated as a self-contained terror network, but enabled the charges to be heard before special courts which dispensed justice in line with the anti-terror legislation. This strategy was exaggerated to the point of absurdity with the conviction of İlker Başbuğ, former Chief of Staff, as the leading member of a terrorist organisation.<sup>44</sup> For, as Commander-in-Chief of the Turkish military, whose predilection for coups d'état is beyond dispute, the Chief of Staff has no need to take recourse to a secret organisation to carry out anti-governmental activities.

All these trials were performed in the name of the protection of the elected government, the rule of law and democracy, and were welcomed as historical progress by liberal and conservative forces alike. However, the campaign was, simultaneously, the work of a police force and judiciary that until that point, had not distinguished itself as a staunch supporter of the

<sup>40</sup> Although the constitutional court rejected this application, it did deprive the AKP of a proportion of the state party financing.

<sup>41</sup> Günter Seufert, "Turkey" (German), in *Jahrbuch der Europäischen Integration* 2012, ed. Werner Weidenfeld and Wolfgang Wessels (Baden-Baden, 2012): 538.

<sup>42</sup> "An Analysis of the Sledgehammer Trial" (Turkish), *Bianet* (online), <http://bianet.org/bianet/hukuk/140996-balyoz-davasi-nedir> (accessed 14 November 2013). *Bianet* is an independent news website.

<sup>43</sup> German criminal law includes similar provisions, see for example Paragraph 83 StGB (German Criminal Code), regarding the planning of a treasonous undertaking.

<sup>44</sup> During the so-called first Ergenekon trial, the appeals procedure is still continuing.

rule of law and whose previous operations had always been politicised or dominated by vested interests.

### The alliance between the Gülen movement and the AKP

During the course of this struggle, the Fethullah Gülen movement opposed the powers of the "State" and displayed sympathy with the AKP for the first time. This alliance was created on the grounds that the AKP's leadership, which had formerly espoused an Islamist ideology, had renounced the ideas of its former leader, Necmettin Erbakan, and drawn closer to the Gülen line of a long-term policy to rebuild state and society. The immediate reason for Gülen's side-swapping was, however, the fact that his organisation had been targeted by "the State" since 1997. As was only subsequently revealed, the military had been planning a series of undercover actions designed to portray the movement as a terrorist organisation, so that an even harder crackdown could take place.<sup>45</sup>

The support of the Gülen movement was of prime importance to the AKP. As the network had relinquished an ostentatious display of religious identity, but also because Gülen had been an erstwhile collaborator with the State, followers of the movement had succeeded in establishing networks in the bureaucracy,<sup>46</sup> chiefly in the police force and judiciary, but also in the military, in the early 1990s, this despite several series of government-orchestrated purges. AKP party members had only limited success with similar endeavours, as, until the end of his term in office in 2007, the former State President Ahmet Necdet Sezer had prevented AKP cadres from being appointed to leading official posts. As a result, the following assessment by Turkish journalist Ali Bayramoğlu should be endorsed in full: "In its dispute with the military, the judiciary and the universities, the AKP had recourse to no other instrument than to this network created by the [Gülen] movement within the police force, which had been formed by the latter for the purpose of undermining the power of the military [within the State] in order to protect itself."<sup>47</sup>

Various sources indeed describe the systematic formation of cadres within the security forces by Gülen followers from around the year 2000 onwards.<sup>48</sup> Spokespeople for the movement defend this strategy by emphasising that, in the face of a lack of legal security, Muslim groups were left with no choice but to infiltrate the bureaucracy and thereby influence state authority. "People will only cease to fear the State when sufficient numbers have found a place there and can proclaim, 'this is my State'".<sup>49</sup>

In 2003 and 2004, then, internet sites sympathetic to the Gülen movement also published reports regarding coup plans within the military for the first time.<sup>50</sup> Pro-government journalists have not hesitated to acknowledge the movement's merits in the struggle against the "Ergenekon conspiracy". "It is no secret that the Gülen movement has carved out a more or less firm position for itself within the police force. However, it would be wrong to ascribe the group's current position at the vanguard of both the bureaucracy and police force solely to its internal cohesion. We must not forget the success of these cadres as far as the investigations into Ergenekon and the attendant criminal trials is concerned."<sup>51</sup>

Left-liberal members of the judiciary go even further, claiming that the strategy according to which the Ergenekon trials were pursued was developed by Gülen movement cadres within the police force from 2006 onwards.<sup>52</sup> They allege that the line of investigation was always stipulated by the heads of the police authorities close to Gülen, as a result of which the state prosecutors, who later gained fame as a result

<sup>48</sup> A series of journalistic publications lists internal documents from the Turkish intelligence agency regarding the systematic organisation of Gülen supporters within the bureaucracy. However, the reliability of these reports is often questionable, as they always also serve as vehicles for the power struggle within the bureaucracy itself, cf., for example, Nedim Şener, *The Fethullah Gülen Community in the Documents of the Ergenekon Trials* (Turkish), Istanbul 2010.

<sup>49</sup> Mustafa Yeşil, "I also asked Hocaefendi [Fethullah Gülen] about the judges [of the movement in the judiciary]" (Turkish), *Taraf*, 7 May 2012. Alliances on the grounds of mutual religious convictions or interests are refused a legal status. As a result, they operate in an area of legal uncertainty. This also applies particularly to the Sunni majority, which remains under the guardianship of the Presidency of Religious Affairs.

<sup>50</sup> Ali Bayramoğlu in the *Taraf* newspaper of 4 October 2010.

<sup>51</sup> Avni Özgürel, "The Controversy Surrounding the Gülen Community" (Turkish), *Radikal*, 18 February 2012.

<sup>52</sup> Orhan Gazi Ertekin and Frauk Özsoy, *Turkisation, Islamisation, Appointment to the Civil Service: The Relationship between AKP, Gülen Community and Judiciary* (Turkish), (Ankara, 2013), 47.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. the publication of internal documents from the office of the general staff in the daily newspaper *Taraf* on 1 November 2009.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Ali Bayramoğlu, "A Demand for Critical Discussion of and Transparency by the Gülen Community" (Turkish), *Taraf*, 4 October 2010.

<sup>47</sup> Ali Bayramoğlu, in *Radikal*, 22 February 2012.

of the trials, never actually had the proceedings under their control.<sup>53</sup> Additionally, they claim that, in the preceding years, jurists sympathetic to the Gülen movement had organised themselves in the special courts (ÖYM), which were responsible for matters of crime against the state and terrorist-related cases, and whose prosecutors had extended powers of attorney at their disposal.<sup>54</sup> A pro-movement observer comments on the role of the Gülen supporters in the special courts and police force as follows: “Some state prosecutors from the devout middle classes are now trying their hands at liberalism and using their current opportunities to react to the constraints they once experienced. The large majority of these individuals are members of one and the same community. The same applies to the police.”<sup>55</sup> The uproar discernible in reports by the movement’s media when, in summer 2012, the government initiated the closure of the special courts and the transfer of all pending trials to a number of senior criminal courts constitutes a further indication of the strong influence of the Gülen sympathisers in the former.<sup>56</sup>

Although the signs that the Gülen movement deliberately positioned certain of its sympathisers in key positions within the security forces and judiciary appear incontrovertible, the assessment of the concrete influence these cadres were able to exert, and still exercise over the tenor of trials is a matter of some dispute. While the religious-conservative faction emphasises its generally increased influence on Turkish politics, deeming this development a necessary part of democratisation and tending to regard the role of the Gülen movement in the bureaucracy as a product of the same, the secular faction views the Gülen network as a clandestine and thus democratically unlawful participant in the transition of power.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 48. However, the weak position of the state prosecutors transcends the Ergenekon trials. “There are currently no judicial police units attached to prosecution offices. Prosecutors rely on police units working for the Ministry of the Interior and have to develop their capacity to guide police investigations effectively and keep strict control of police activity”, European Commission, *Turkey, 2013 Progress Report* (Brussels, 2013), 46.

<sup>54</sup> Ertekin and Özsoy, *Turkisation, Islamisation, Appointment to the Civil Service* (see note 52), 47.

<sup>55</sup> Ali Bayramoğlu in the daily newspaper *Vatan*, 23 February 2012.

<sup>56</sup> Internet discussion platform *Ekşi Sözlük*, “The Gülen Community’s Penchant for the Special Courts” (Turkish), <https://eksisozluk.com/cemaatin-ozel-yetkili-mahkeme-sevgisi-3419004> (accessed 15 September 2013).

A realistic assessment of the significant role played by the Gülen supporters must take a series of factors into account. First and foremost, Turkish bureaucracy has always been a hotbed of rancorous turf wars between ideologically, religiously and party-politically organised groups, precisely as a result of the restrictions imposed on legal and public political debate by the Kemalist state ideology.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, the tensions between a secular-oriented military and a police force sited in a religious-traditional milieu can be traced as far back as the late Ottoman Empire, when the military officers became upholders of westernisation. If one additionally considers the fact that, over the course of the last decade, conservative players have integrated themselves within the country’s political, economic and cultural elite, it is impossible to expect the bureaucracy to have remained unaffected by this change. All these considerations relativise the role of the Gülen cadres within the bureaucracy. Nevertheless, this does not signify that the investigations and trials related to the “Ergenekon” organisation could have occurred without being controlled largely centrally, or without the concerted efforts of colluding political networks. For the above mentioned reasons, then, only the supporters of the Gülen movement would have been available to assume this coordinating function. As a result, it should be assumed that their cadres played a significant role in this turf war, a role that was made possible on the grounds that their political and socially-moral ideology was shared by large portions of civil servants within the security forces.

### The current feud between the Gülen movement and the AKP

Fethullah Gülen’s appeal of 1 August 2010 was his most unequivocally supportive of the AKP in any political question to date. The preacher called on citizens to support the referendum to change the constitution initiated by the government, which was actually passed on 12 September of the same year with a 58 per cent majority. According to Gülen, this issue was of

<sup>57</sup> This is also unwittingly admitted by precisely those authors who emphasise the role of the cadres close to Gülen the most vehemently, cf. Ahmet Şık, *The Imam’s Army* (Turkish), <http://www.pdfindir.com/ahmet-%C5%9F%C4%B1k-imam%C4%B1n-ordusu-pdf-1.html> (accessed 20 September 2013). Although the book was banned prior to publication, it can be accessed online.

such prime importance that “even the dead should be called from the graves to cast their votes.”<sup>58</sup> This was to be the final instance of cooperation between the religious leader and the government. The first seeds of discontent were sown in June 2010, when Gülen and the AKP disagreed over the flotilla designed to breach the Israeli naval blockade of the Gaza Strip. The initiative was led by the IHH, an aid agency close to the AKP, and was performed with Ankara's approval. Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu had glorified the nine Turks killed by Israeli soldiers during the storming of the lead ship *Mavi Marmara* as “martyrs”,<sup>59</sup> while the Turkish government recalled its ambassadors from Tel Aviv. Gülen, on the other hand, condemned the campaign in the *Wall Street Journal* as an unlawful challenge to Israel's state authority.<sup>60</sup> However, the movement's current feud with the AKP far exceeds this initial public dispute. Three intricately entwined sets of issues are responsible for the current antagonism.

Firstly, it has been observed that the very network of cliques close to Gülen within the security forces, the judiciary and other branches of the bureaucratic system, which aided the government in its struggle against the “Ergenekon conspiracy”, is now being accused of politicking for the purposes of the movement, i.e. in its own interests. Even observers supportive of the movement and, these days, rather critical of the government state that “Within the State [i.e. its bureaucracy], powers exist which elude Erdoğan's control”, referring here to the networks of Gülen supporters.<sup>61</sup> Erdoğan himself explicitly accused the special courts and the state prosecutors employed there

of behaving like a “state within the State”.<sup>62</sup> The pro-government press openly denounced the Gülen movement for allegedly attempting to dominate the entire bureaucratic system, thus creating a “new guardianship regime” to replace the military, so recently deposed by the AKP.<sup>63</sup>

Secondly, the political visions of the ruling party and the Gülen movement now diverge. The dispute was ignited primarily over the Kurdish question. In September 2011, information regarding secret negotiations between the National Intelligence Organisation (MİT) and the Union of Communities in Kurdistan (KCK)<sup>64</sup> some months previously was made public. In February 2012, state prosecutors at Istanbul's special courts subpoenaed Hakan Fidan, the undersecretary responsible for the Intelligence Agency at the Office of the Prime Minister. He was required to respond to accusations ranging from “disclosure of secrets to the KCK” and “courier service for the organisation” to “collaboration with the KCK for the establishment of a Kurdish state”.<sup>65</sup> Prime Minister Erdoğan had ordered the negotiations personally and now saw himself as the potential target for a charge of high treason. He accused the state prosecutors of exceeding their authority and deflected further investigations with two emergency measures, namely railroading an amendment of the law on intelligence through parliament just two weeks later, which guaranteed agency employees additional penal immunity, and drastically reducing the number of special courts in July 2012. Additionally, these are now only responsible for pending cases relating to crimes against the State. This step cleared the way for a shake-up of the judges and prosecutors, thus allowing the government to marginalise the networks associated with the Gülen movement.<sup>66</sup>

58 Daily newspaper *Haber Türk*, edition of 1 August 2010.

New statutes regarding the composition and election of the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK) and the constitutional court, which were designed to subvert the supremacy of the Kemalists within the judiciary, constituted the core of the referendum.

59 “The Martyrs of the Mavi Marmara” (Turkish), *Beyaz Gazete* (online), 4 April 2013, <http://www.beyazgazete.com/video/anahaber/trt-haber-67/2013/04/04/mavi-marmara-sehitleri-395487.html> (accessed 14 November 2013).

60 Joe Lauria, “Reclusive Turkish Imam Criticizes Gaza Flotilla”, *The Wall Street Journal* (online), 4 June 2010, <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052748704025304575284721280274694> (accessed 14 November 2013).

61 Interview by the news website T24 with Turkish journalist Cengiz Çandar, 26 November 2012, <http://t24.com.tr/haber/cengiz-candar-ortadoguda-sinirlar-degisecek-turkiye-de-buna-dahil/218234> (accessed 21 November 2013).

62 *Eksi Sözlük* discussion platform, <https://eksisozluk.com/recep-tayyip-erdoganin-yargi-elestirisi-3417404> (accessed 26 September 2013).

63 Cem Küçük in the pro-government daily *Yeni Şafak* of 19 June 2013, for example.

64 The KCK are the result of the reorganisation of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Today, both terms are used synonymously.

65 “Investigations Against the National Intelligence Agency Regarding the KCK” (Turkish), *bianet* (online), 9 February 2012, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/insan-haklari/136035-mite-kck-sorulacak> (accessed 21 November 2013).

66 Simultaneously, a purge of the police force was carried out, in the course of which up to 700 senior- and middle-ranking policemen were transferred from Istanbul to the provinces, see Claire Berlinski, “Anatomy of a Power Struggle”, *The Journal of International Security Affairs* 23, no. 2 (2012): 125,

Today, the network's spokespeople reject all responsibility for the state prosecutors' involvement in the KCK affair. They reference recent statements by Fethullah Gülen which supposedly demonstrate that he is in favour of granting the Kurds larger cultural freedoms.<sup>67</sup> However, at the time of the dispute, the movement's press steadfastly defended the investigations against the head of the Intelligence Agency. As a result, the pro-government media continues to portray the Gülen movement as a significant obstacle to the resolution of the Kurdish question twenty months later, although it appears highly doubtful that specific political differences really are the prime reason for the government's animosity towards the Gülen movement.

One indication of this is that, unlike the movement had feared,<sup>68</sup> the government has refrained from abolishing the special courts altogether. They not only remain responsible for the Ergenekon trials, but also for the so-called KCK proceedings. During the latter, approximately 2,000 defendants, around 900 of whom were remanded in custody, were forced to defend themselves against the accusation of being members of a terrorist organisation.<sup>69</sup> In many cases, this charge rested solely on the extremely wide definition of terrorism under Turkish law, which is why the request to terminate the proceedings constitutes a core element of the Turkish State's current negotiations with the PKK.

The fact that the government continued to entrust the special courts with these trials, whose judgements it had criticised repeatedly in the strongest terms, grants a profound insight into the balance of power and shady tricks prevalent in Turkish politics. Had the special courts been abolished completely, the government would have been forced to reckon with a wave of releases of defendants from the Ergenekon trials and a subsequent resurgence of military power. It would also have had to answer directly to the Kurds for the frequently constitutionally questionable judgements in the KCK trials. The retention of the special courts for current trials related to crimes against the State

reduces pressure on the government in both areas, instead directing this towards the Gülen movement and ensuring it is portrayed as the key impediment on the path to democratisation. Meanwhile, the government has delegated new cases concerning crimes against the State to regional senior criminal courts, which protects them against further action by the Gülen network's cliques within the police force and the judiciary.

The sudden adoption by Gülen's supporters of a confrontational stance towards the government came as a complete surprise to outsiders because, however strongly a social force is anchored in the bureaucratic system, it cannot really pose a threat to the government without military backing. As a result, the movement's political suicide is already being predicted.<sup>70</sup> There are three potential reasons why the movement has abandoned its former political restraint and caution.

On the one hand, the large popularity it has enjoyed in the last decade has resulted in the expansion of its financial, economic and political options, and the expectations of its supporters have increased simultaneously in an ideational and financial respect. Economic rent-seeking has also developed, which is directed at bureaucratic positions, the assignment of government orders, the designation of building plots and the state funding of formerly privately initiated educational institutions at home and abroad.

Secondly, the movement's increased expectation of "return" is set against fears of the demise of Fethullah Gülen, who is in poor health and without whom the organisation threatens to collapse. Simultaneously, the network's expansion abroad is stagnating. In central Asian countries, the initially sizeable leeway accorded by some governments to the movement was curtailed, while, in the Middle East, the Gülen community faces an increasing radicalisation of its religious environment, which hampers the dissemination of its version of a moderate Islam.<sup>71</sup>

Thirdly, the movement had already suffered a setback as regards Turkey's security bureaucracy prior to the outbreak of open conflict with the government. In

<http://www.afpc.org/files/getContentPostAttachment/220> (accessed 21 November 2013).

<sup>67</sup> Statement by the Journalists and Writers Foundation (GYV) in the *Zaman* newspaper, published on 14 August 2013.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Hüseyin Gülerce in the pro-movement daily *Zaman*, published on 4 July 2012.

<sup>69</sup> The figure according to official information from the Turkish Ministry of Justice, quoted in Fikret İlkiz, "KCK Cases and the Judiciary Mechanism", *Perspectives – Political Analysis and Commentary from Turkey*, no. 2 (October 2012): 41–5.

<sup>70</sup> Yüksel Taşkın, "The Gülenists, a Movement between Religious Nationalism and Transnational Dynamics" (Turkish), *Birikim* 282 (October 2012): 31.

<sup>71</sup> Bayram Balcı, "The Development of the Fethullah Gülen Community in Central Asia, the USA and Europe" (Turkish), *Birikim* 282 (October 2012): 52–66, and personal communication with journalist Ali Topuz in Istanbul on 11 September 2013.

March 2011, the government transferred Turkey's largest monitoring system (GES), which had, until then, been controlled by the Office of the General Staff, to the National Intelligence Service (MİT). As a result, the weakening of the military was not accompanied by a strengthening of the police force, in which Gülen's supporters are particularly well organised, but instead benefited the intelligence service, controlled by Erdoğan.<sup>72</sup> The previous year, the leadership of the MİT had been transferred to Hakan Fidan, the undersecretary responsible for the Intelligence Agency, who, in February 2012, was forced to answer to the Special Court of Istanbul on suspicion of "collaboration".

By announcing the closure of all establishments offering revision courses, one of the Gülen movement's principal sources of income, in September and October 2013, the government stepped up pressure on the network a further notch. As this measure was implemented without any accompanying educational reform,<sup>73</sup> it was intended explicitly to weaken the movement. This demonstrates that the government has clearly prevailed in its dispute with the Gülen movement. A political opportunity for the latter could only arise in the event of a leadership change within the AKP, or if the party becomes divided, in the case of a poor showing at the local elections on 30 March 2014, for instance.<sup>74</sup> However, there are no signs of this to date.

<sup>72</sup> Murat Yetkin in the newspaper *Radikal*, published on 8 March 2011.

<sup>73</sup> According to a statement by the former Chairman of the Turkish Education Council (TİK) Ziya Selçuk in the daily newspaper *Taraf*, published on 28 October 2013.

<sup>74</sup> Ergün Yıldırım in the weekly newspaper *Ağos*, published on 15 August 2013.

# The Fethullah Gülen Movement as International Player

## The Movement in the USA

In the USA, the image enjoyed by Fethullah Gülen and his movement is, despite several setbacks, far more positive than his reputation in Turkey or Germany. A semi-official statement about his person notes: “Gülen preaches a distinctly Turkish brand of Islam that condemns terrorism, promotes interfaith dialogue and cross-cultural understanding, and can function in concert with secular democratic mechanisms and modern economic and technological modes of living.”<sup>75</sup> In 2011, the East West Institute<sup>76</sup> nominated Fethullah Gülen as the recipient of its annual Peacebuilding Award. The laudatory speeches were made by Kofi Annan and two former US Secretaries of State, James Baker and Madeleine Albright.<sup>77</sup>

In the USA, Gülen’s followers are involved in a broad spectrum of topics and fields of activity, ranging from schools, media enterprises, think tanks<sup>78</sup> and lobby groups to management consultancies and other commercial enterprises. The Turkic American Alliance, which provides not only immigrants from Turkey, but also those from central Asian Turkic States and the Balkan States with a platform, acts as the parent organisation for pro-Gülen institutions.<sup>79</sup> These are the regions in which Gülen’s now global educational initiatives took hold after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Even experts are no longer able to gain a complete overview of the movement’s extensive network in the USA. In view of the sheer extent of its activities, the Turkish-French researcher Bayram Balcı, who specialises in Gülen organisations in Central Asia, the

United States and Europe, writes: “The heart of the movement now beats in the USA.”<sup>80</sup>

Immediately after Gülen’s relocation to America in 1999, his US-based supporters initiated an intensive campaign for interfaith dialogue, and founded the “Rumi Forum” in Washington in the same year. The forum’s introductory video includes former US President Bill Clinton and the internationally established expert on Islamic Studies, John Esposito.<sup>81</sup> Its name references the Anatolian mystic Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī (Dschalal ad-Din ar-Rumi), who abandoned orthodox scholarship in favour of a direct experience of God.

Gülen did not explore the Islamic mystics (Sufis) in his writings until the nineties, when he was over fifty years old.<sup>82</sup> In accordance with the teachings of the Nakşibendiye Order, he had previously distanced himself from the individual search for God as taught by the Sufis, and also negated the line of thought which suggested a hidden meaning to the Koran different to its patent, literal meaning, with the result that he opposed the often attendant relativisation of religious rules regarding cult and lifestyle. However, the forum’s eponym advocates precisely this interpretation. As a result, Gülen’s reference to Rumi appears instrumental and pragmatic and is probably due in large part to the positive image enjoyed by Islamic mysticism in the USA as opposed to the more critically viewed orthodoxy. In the USA, Gülen’s movement has succeeded in gaining the support of an entire series of prominent academics, and continues to bask in the approval of part of the political elite.

Left- and right-wing critics of the movement in Turkey point to the fact that Gülen had started adopting a pro-US position in concrete questions of foreign policy prior to his relocation to the USA, which clashed with the emphatically negative picture he painted of the

<sup>75</sup> Jim Zanotti, *Turkey: Background and U.S. Relations*, CRS Report for Congress R41368 (Washington: Congressional Research Service, 27 April 2012), 9.

<sup>76</sup> Founded as the Institute for East West Security Studies.

<sup>77</sup> Video excerpts from the tributes paid by the three speakers can be viewed at <http://www.firstpost.com/topic/perosn/madeleine-k-albright-about-fethulla-gulen-video-HADHIEGtfkg-1993-1.html> (accessed 13 December 2012).

<sup>78</sup> These include, for example, the Rethink Institute in Washington, <http://www.rethinkinstitute.org> (accessed 17 November 2013).

<sup>79</sup> See the organisation’s internet presence, the Rumi Forum, *Rumi Forum Corporate Video*, <http://turkicamericanalliance.org/about-taa/> (accessed 15 December 2012).

<sup>80</sup> Balcı, “The Development of the Fethullah Gülen Community” (see note 71), 58.

<sup>81</sup> Rumi Forum, *Rumi Forum Corporate Video*, [http://vimeo.com/moogaloop.swf?clip\\_id=7396904&am](http://vimeo.com/moogaloop.swf?clip_id=7396904&am) (accessed 25 December 2012).

<sup>82</sup> Mustafa Gökçek, quoted in Michel, “The Theological Dimension of the Thought of M. Fethullah Gülen” (see note 17), 62.

West at the time. They recall the fact that, in the nineties, the USA encouraged Turkey to expand its influence in the former Soviet areas of Central Asia, and insinuate that the Gülen community received substantial support from the CIA when establishing its schools in Central Asia.<sup>83</sup> In the eighties and nineties, Islamically-oriented circles in Turkey found it difficult to comprehend why Gülen justified the Turkish and American support of Saddam Hussein against Shiite Iran on the one hand, and America's bombing of Iraq in the Gulf War in 1991 on the other. They also suggest the movement's possible political instrumentalisation by Washington.<sup>84</sup> In recent times, it is striking that Turkey's National Intelligence Agency (MİT) and its boss Hakan Fidan have become problematic both in the eyes of the Gülen movement and for parts of the political public in the USA. On 9 October 2013, Fidan was accused by the *Wall Street Journal* of arming jihadists in Syria and compromising US interests.<sup>85</sup> A few days later, the *Washington Post* wrote that the MİT under Fidan had allegedly revealed the identity of Israeli intelligence officers to Iran.<sup>86</sup> And shortly thereafter, the *Financial Times* questioned Turkey's loyalty to the alliance, citing Fidan as one reason for this.<sup>87</sup> Within Turkey, this criticism of the head of the Intelligence Agency is interpreted as a direct attack on the Erdoğan government.<sup>88</sup> American religious scholar Helen Rose Ebaugh, whose eminently positive book about the movement was recently published in Ger-

man, also acknowledges an at least partial overlap of the aims of the Gülen network and US interests.<sup>89</sup>

The positive *public* reception enjoyed by the movement in the USA, however, should, in all likelihood, be ascribed instead to the higher prevalence of religiosity in America in comparison with Europe, and to the more pronounced appreciation of religion's social role. Nevertheless, the movement's positive image has started showing cracks. This can be attributed primarily to three developments.<sup>90</sup>

Firstly, the increasing references to Islamic identity, Ottoman history and Muslim solidarity within the rhetoric of the Turkish ruling party in recent years, whose earlier close ties with the Gülen movement have not been forgotten. In particular, the tensions between Turkey and Israel fuelled suspicion against the long-term aims of moderate Turkish Muslims as a whole in the USA.

In addition, the movement's reputation was also dealt a serious blow by reports that sections of the Turkish police force and judiciary were infiltrated by Gülen supporters. This information reinforced doubts regarding the sincerity of the movement's figurehead, the innocence of his teachings and the transparency of the entire movement.

A lack of transparency was the byword when the so-called Charter Schools close to the movement, and their governance by commercial enterprises attracted the attention of the media. Over 120 such "contract schools" are ascribed to the Gülen movement.<sup>91</sup> Criticism was sparked by the almost exclusive employment of Turkish teaching staff at these establishments, obscure business practices and the initial categorical denial of any connection between the schools and Fethullah Gülen.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>83</sup> According to the pro-PKK daily newspaper *Yeni Özgür Politika* on 4 March 2009, <http://www.kalemlervekiliclar.com/Thread-Gulen-okullarinin-finansoru-kim> (accessed 10 December 2012).

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Ali Bulaç in the former daily newspaper *Vahdet*, 11 February 1991, documented in <http://www.n-f-k.com/nfkforum/index.php?topic/14327-fethullah-gulen-hareketi-ve-darbeler/> (accessed 29 November 2012).

<sup>85</sup> Adam Entous and Joe Parkinson, "Turkey's Spymaster Plots Own Course on Syria", *The Wall Street Journal*, 10 October 2013.

<sup>86</sup> David Ignatius, "Turkey Blows Israel's Cover for Iranian Spy Rings", *The Washington Post*, 17 October 2013.

<sup>87</sup> Daniel Dombey, "Doubts Rise over Turkey's Ties to the West", *Financial Times*, 20 October 2013.

<sup>88</sup> The article refers to a campaign against Erdoğan, which is only comprehensible against the background of an earlier article in *The Wall Street Journal*. Here, Obama's Middle East strategy is declared a failure. Instead of relying on political collaborations with moderate Islamic parties and groups like the AKP and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, it would be more advisable to support the secular powers in these countries, Walter Russel Mead, "The Failed Grand Strategy in the Middle East", *The Wall Street Journal*, 24 August 2013.

<sup>89</sup> Helen Rose Ebaugh, *The Gülen Movement: An Empirical Study*, Freiburg 2012. In an interview with the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, the author states: "Here, I agree with the former US Secretaries of State James Baker and Madeleine Albright and the ex-CIA man Graham Fuller. They state that we must support movements like this, as they are an alternative to fundamentalism", in "'An Alternative to Fundamentalism'. Sociologist of Religion Helen Rose Ebaugh Views the Gülen Movement as an Opportunity for the West" (German), *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (online), 21 June 2010, <http://www.nzz.ch/aktuell/startseite/eine-alternative-zum-fundamentalismus-1.6182405> (accessed 20 November 2013).

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Balci, "The Development of the Fethullah Gülen Community" (see note 71), 59ff.

<sup>91</sup> Zanotti, *Turkey* (see note 75), p. 9.

<sup>92</sup> Sharon Higgins, "Largest Charter Network in U.S.: Schools Tied to Turkey", *The Washington Post* (online), 27 March 2012.



## The Fethullah Gülen Movement within Europe's Turkish-Muslim Diaspora

Within Western European societies, those involved in the Gülen movement face considerably different challenges than those prevailing in the USA on the one hand and in central Asian or Balkan states on the other. A Muslim-Turkish middle class is currently establishing itself in the USA, using tools such as inter-faith dialogue, the operation of schools (transferred to it by the state authorities) and entrepreneurial networks. This is concomitantly allowing it to strengthen the movement's global position. The attention of Gülen supporters in the USA is focused on the multicultural American majority society and, indirectly, on the global public. In central Asian countries and Balkan states, the movement's activities are directed at Muslim majority societies or larger Muslim groups within the population. Here, it advocates a specific form of Muslim identity and propagates the Turkish language and culture. In the USA, Central Asia and the Balkans, then, the Gülen movement acts as a Turkish-Muslim pioneer. Players are either, as in Central Asia, predominantly "delegates" from Turkey or representatives of the first generation of immigrants who were already part of the movement in their native countries. In all cases, the Gülen network is the first sustainable non-state Turkish-(Muslim) organisation.

By contrast, the Gülen movement is a latecomer to Western European countries. It only entered the public spotlight a good thirty years after other Turkish-Muslim associations with which it shares its chief target group: immigrants of Turkish origin. In Europe, the movement can, as is the case in Turkey, be traced back to study groups focusing on the writings of Said-i Nursi,<sup>93</sup> which were, however, not particularly widespread as a result of labour immigrants' social structures. In order to achieve Gülen's objective of creating a Muslim elite via a self-organised system of secular education, a class of Turkish entrepreneurs and free-lancers able to finance the necessary institutions was required on the one hand, and a critical mass of young people with a command of the respective local languages on the other. As a result, the existence of a second and third generation of immigrants was a prerequisite in order to implement Gülen's ideas.

However, despite its late arrival in Western Europe and notwithstanding the fact that the proverbial cake

appeared already completely shared out, the Gülen movement spread its wings there very quickly. According to some researchers, it is currently deemed the most influential of the Turkish communities in almost all countries in the region.<sup>94</sup> What are the grounds for this success?

### The Gülen movement's stance towards other Turkish-Muslim organisations

Turkish labour migration to Europe began in Germany, where the first Turkish-Muslim organisations were also founded. In contrast to countries like Greece, the Turkish State made no agreement with the Federal Republic regarding the provision of religious guidance for its citizens. 1973 saw the establishment of the Association of Islamic Cultural Centres (VIKZ) in Cologne, an amalgamation of mosque communities which follow the tradition of the Nakşibendi sheikh Süleyman Hilmi Tunahan (1888–1959). During the decades of rigid republican laicism, Tunahan was the most successful initiator of an underground Koran study movement, which maintained its intake with strategies including the establishment of school boarding houses and student residences. Cologne also saw the constitution of the Millî Görüş movement (today IGMG) in 1975, which is closely connected to the history of the Islamic parties around Necmettin Erbakan. At the time, the Turkish Republic viewed both movements as an expression of "religious reaction". Repressing this "reaction" overseas was the prime motivation for the establishment of the state-controlled Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DİTİB) in Cologne in 1984. These large-scale Turkish-Muslim organisations vie for believers in the European host countries, as well as for mosque communities, Koran students and clients for their affiliated economic enterprises, which include travel agencies for pilgrimages and funeral directors. They are also in competition as far as the social and political representation of the religious rights of Muslims are concerned, be it public debates regarding the approval of the headscarf at school and at the workplace, the introduction of Islamic religious instruction, permission for ritual

<sup>93</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, "Holland and the Gülen Movement" (Turkish), *Birikim* 282 (October 2012): 69ff.

<sup>94</sup> Balcı, "The Development of the Fethullah Gülen Community" (see note 71), 63. Johan Leman has supported this with figures for the educational sector in Belgium, "The Flexible and Multilayered Character of the 'Hizmet' (Social Service) Movement in Immigration: A Case Study from Belgium", in *Mapping the Gülen Movement*, ed. Çelik (see note 17), 89.

slaughter or the construction of cemeteries and mosques.

The Gülen movement deliberately eschews all these activities by Turkish-Islamic associations and organisations, which are repeatedly criticised as underscoring tendencies towards seclusion and the creation of parallel societies. Instead of organising Koran classes, the movement concentrates on the institution of revision courses designed to support under-achieving pupils. Instead of concerning itself with the construction and running of mosques, it dedicates itself to the establishment of private schools, preferably grammar schools. Instead of advocating the unhindered display of Islamic symbols in public (headscarf, minaret, Muslim holidays), it opens centres promoting inter-cultural dialogue. And instead of devoting itself to the political mobilisation of immigrants, frequently underprivileged in terms of economic situation and education, it initiates entrepreneur's associations and makes every effort to establish contact with the economic, political and cultural elites of the respective host countries. Viewed as a whole, this policy mirrors the familiar strategy applied by the Gülen movement in Turkey, characterised as it is by a rejection of any direct politicisation of religion and aimed instead at the grooming of a devout elite via secular education.

In addition, the Gülen movement seeks no cooperation or even contact with other Muslim associations active in Europe. In Germany, it is represented neither in the Central Council of Muslims in Germany (ZMD), nor in the German Islamic Council (IRD). It also has no involvement in the Coordinating Council of Muslims (KRM), which was established as a nationwide union of the DİTİB, IRD, ZMD and VIKZ in 2007, and avoids participation in the German Islam Conference (DIK). Instead, initiatives close to Gülen set great store by dialogue and cooperation with the churches. These efforts, coupled with the absence of any endeavours to strengthen Muslims' public presence in the host countries, have occasionally resulted in the Gülen movement being accused of displaying "Christianising tendencies".<sup>95</sup> Although researchers sympathetic to the movement praise its active citizenship in the host countries, they concurrently warn it against championing the immigrants' assimilation.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>95</sup> Balci, "The Development of the Fethullah Gülen Community" (see note 71), 66.

<sup>96</sup> Leman, "The Flexible and Multilayered Character of the 'Hizmet' Movement" (see note 94), 97.

In Germany, criticism related to precisely this advice could be targeted at the "Dialogue" grammar school in Cologne, a peerless example of the educational activities in North Rhine-Westphalia inspired by Gülen, for offering Catholic and Protestant religious education, but no Islamic instruction.<sup>97</sup> Indeed, all schools inspired by Gülen's teachings in this federal state forgo the inclusion of Islamic instruction in their curricula, which would actually be possible under the North Rhine-Westphalia Education Act.<sup>98</sup> The fact that part-time teachers of German origin are in the majority at these schools in Germany, unlike in the USA, Central Asia or the Balkan States, could also encourage similar criticism by Muslims.

### The Gülen movement's appeal for the Turkish-Muslim diaspora

For decades, Turkish immigrants in Europe ensured that their children maintained their Turkish-Muslim identity by sending their offspring to schools in Turkey. The fact that many are now choosing to tread the path prepared by Nursi and Gülen, namely trusting that the acquisition of secular knowledge will strengthen their children's religious identity, can justifiably be termed "revolutionary".<sup>99</sup>

The Gülen movement's doctrine that Islam also demands and justifies knowledge acquisition and transfer is used by Turkish immigrants as a means of legitimising their quest for social advancement. The following figures illustrate the resulting dynamic:<sup>100</sup> today, over 60 educational institutions inspired by Gülen exist in North Rhine-Westphalia alone, with more than 300 in Germany as a whole. These institutions have founded numerous subsidiaries or branches in the Rhine-Ruhr metropolises. In Cologne, the educational institution Academy e.V. boasts seven branches and provided extracurricular revision courses to approximately 1,050 pupils in 2011. The

<sup>97</sup> Seyitahmed Tokmak, "The Educational Concept of Schools within the Gülen Movement: An Example from North Rhine-Westphalia" (German), in *Die Gülen-Bewegung: zwischen Predigt und Praxis*, ed. Ursula Boos-Nünning et al. (Münster, 2011), 59–66, here 61.

<sup>98</sup> Bekim Agai, "The Work of the Gülen Movement in North Rhine-Westphalia: Players, Ideas, Perceptions" (German), in *Die Gülen-Bewegung: zwischen Predigt und Praxis*, ed. Boos-Nünning et al. (see note 97), 29–58, here 40.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 29–36.

revision courses are the fruits of the first phase of the Gülen movement's educational campaign targeted specifically at the European diaspora. The establishment of schools, primarily private grammar schools, forms the second phase. In 2011, three private schools inspired by Gülen existed in NRW, with 24 in Germany as a whole the same year.

The considerable success enjoyed by the educational initiative in Germany established by Gülen and maintained by devout Muslims is certainly due, in part, to the German education system's comparative failure to ensure that children from migrant backgrounds achieve higher educational qualifications. At the aforementioned "Dialogue" grammar school in Cologne, just 10 per cent of pupils come from families in which at least one parent graduated from a grammar school (or equivalent institution). In consequence, the schools run by the Gülen movement can be viewed as educational self-help tools for immigrants, which also precipitate a successful shift in their educational orientation.

The space accorded to the Turkish language, culture and identity in terms of educational work differs both in various European countries and across Germany's federal states. In Belgium, the movement avoids emphasising Turkish nationality almost entirely, in contrast to in other states in Central Asia, the Balkans and Africa. The Turkish flag is not displayed in schools in Belgium, and Turkish does not form part of the curriculum. There, schools related to the movement have made themselves accessible to other immigrant groups, and also endeavour to attract pupils of Belgian origin.<sup>101</sup> In Germany, the schools are also stepping up efforts to appeal to parents of both other immigration backgrounds and those of German origin. In Stuttgart, Turkish is dispensed with, while in Berlin it is a second foreign language.<sup>102</sup> The increasing importance of this language is now also being underscored in NRW. The virtually worldwide campaign for the promotion of Turkish, widely known as the Turkish Language Olympiads, operates in Germany under the name of "German-Turkish Cultural Olympiads", a label designed to accommodate the discourse on integration. In the Netherlands, the event was accorded an environmentally-friendly slant and altered to the "Environmental Olympiads".

<sup>101</sup> Leman, "The Flexible and Multilayered Character of the 'Hizmet' Movement" (see note 94), *passim*.

<sup>102</sup> Jochen Thies, *We Are Part of this Society: Insights into the Gülen Movement's Educational Initiatives* (Freiburg i. Br., 2013), 133.

However, despite all its educational efforts and initiatives to foster dialogue, the Gülen movement remains as controversial in Europe as it is in Turkey. There are three fundamental reasons for this.

For one thing, the political climate has changed and, with it, the paradigms for discussion regarding labour migration to Europe and its ramifications. One indication of this is the shift in the terms used to define the "problem group" over the years. From "guest workers" (*Gastarbeiter*) in the 1960s and 70s to "Turks" in the 80s and 90s and now, since the 2000s, "Muslims", the terms used to describe this ethnic minority have oscillated for decades.<sup>103</sup> In the public debate on integration and Islam, the dichotomy between the "liberal principles of the host society" and the "illiberal value systems of the Muslim immigrants" is now firmly established.<sup>104</sup>

Secondly, the dispute surrounding the Gülen movement in Europe is a direct reflection of the political squabbles in Turkey, where the movement is customarily viewed as a politically unified power and perceived in a hostile manner by unwaveringly secular forces, the extreme left and the large majority of Alevis.<sup>105</sup> This also results in parts of Gülen's earlier works being drawn on rather summarily in order to highlight the "real intentions" of the supporters currently active in his name in Europe.

Thirdly, players within the Gülen movement have also been unable to deal with questions regarding the organisation's internal cohesion in a relaxed manner in Europe either. As in Turkey and the USA, so in Europe: when the question of the connection between the respective institutions, Fethullah Gülen and his network arises, the representatives of establishments linked to Gülen initially deny any ties to the latter and only admit that Gülen is revered as their inspiration after lengthy probing. However, any links between the individual initiatives are subsequently usually negated.<sup>106</sup> Additionally, the fact that pro-

<sup>103</sup> Martin van Bruinessen describes this shift as a pan-European phenomenon in *After Van Gogh: Roots of Anti-Muslim Rage*, paper presented at the workshop "Public Debates about Islam in Europe. How and Why 'Immigrants' Became 'Muslims'" (Florence/Montecatini Terme: European University Institute, 22–26 March 2006).

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Anne Schönfeld, "Muslim Loyalty Put to the Test. The Reception of the Cartoon Controversy in Germany", in *Religion, Identity and Politics: Germany and Turkey in Interaction*, ed. Haldun Gülalp and Günter Seufert (London, 2013), 87–99.

<sup>105</sup> Van Bruinessen, "Holland and the Gülen Movement" (see note 93), 69.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

Gülen academics accept the movement's self-presentation as a purely loosely connected structure does little to placate critics, who, for their part, assume the existence of a perfectly functioning, hierarchical leadership and control mechanism.<sup>107</sup>

**107** See for example Serap Çileli, "Fethullah Gülen, Wolf in Sheep's Clothing" (German), *cileli.de*, 13 February 2013, <http://www.cileli.de/2013/02/fethullah-guelen-wolf-im-schafspelz/> (accessed 20 December 2013).

# Gülen and His Supporters: Attempting a Definition

## NGO Network, Religious Community or Political Secret Society?

As a reaction to criticism regarding a lack of transparency, the Gülen movement started to concede that it was more than merely a series of co-existing institutions approximately two years ago. Meanwhile, it describes itself as a “society” in international publications, simultaneously rejecting the use of the term “community/*cemaat*”. The self-definition as a society serves two purposes: firstly, the movement wishes to imply that there is no fixed membership (and, with this, no firm inner structure), and no exterior demarcation. Secondly, it wishes to create the impression that its own (ethical and political) orientation is aligned entirely with the attitudes in mainstream Turkish society and that it represents and is incorporated within the same.<sup>108</sup> The current image projected by one of the network’s institutions, which strongly rejects the suggestion that it pursues self-serving political goals, is one of a “democratic, civil society movement.”<sup>109</sup> Religion is referred to in neither of the two key documents listed. In fact, proselytising or even religious instruction play no part in the movement’s official institutions.

However, the movement simultaneously makes no pretence of the fact that its civil society activities have a religious motivation. The corresponding thoughts of its *spiritus rector* are stated openly, and it is no secret that the large majority of volunteers working within schools and associations and the teachers who are members of the movement view their educational commitment as godly actions per se.<sup>110</sup> At the same time, it seems fair to state that the activists are filled

with a strong sense of affiliation towards the movement and loyalty towards it. Moreover, the existence of a common habitus among Gülen’s supporters cannot be overlooked.

Nonetheless, where do these characteristics evolve? The movement’s residential communities are the usual answer to this question, which date back to the early days of Gülen’s ministry and are known as “light-houses”. Their daily routine is characterised by the strict performance of ritual prayers, repetitive remembrance of God, reading the Koran and studying Gülen’s writings. These activities are complemented by social control mechanisms designed to influence the activists’ behaviour, such as group discussions and the imperative regarding the mutual assumption of responsibility for the actions of the residential community’s other members. All this results in a stabilisation of intellectual, emotional and behavioural tendencies which generate the aforementioned habitus.<sup>111</sup> Gülen himself views the residential communities as the dynamic core of his religious community. According to him, the sum total of the energy they generate should be directed at further growth and – as the ultimate goal – at the moral reform of society, which, in Gülen’s eyes, is coextensive with the civil society re-Islamisation of Muslim countries. To transform the individual into a “soldier of light” who strives to achieve this goal with all his might, Gülen believes it necessary to fill the “empty heads” of a “generation living in accordance with meaningless paradigms” with the truths of faith.<sup>112</sup>

The movement’s supporters are convinced that they are fulfilling a divine mandate made manifest, and refer in the process to a saying by the Prophet (*hadith*) which constituted his response when pressed on the subject of his most loyal believers: “My sincere believ-

<sup>108</sup> Ekrem Dumanlı, “Society, Not Community!”, *Turkish Review* 2, no. 2 (19 March 2012): 8–11.

<sup>109</sup> Statement by the Journalists and Writers Foundation (GYV) in the *Zaman* newspaper, published on 14 August 2013.

<sup>110</sup> “Consequently, even physics lessons become part of the struggle against the *Ğähiliya* (ignorance of God), the schools become the actual houses of prayer and the teacher the core figure of the faith”, Tobias Specker, “Fethullah Gülen: An Introduction” (German), in Boos-Nünning et al., *Die Gülen-Bewegung: zwischen Predigt und Praxis* (see note 97), 15–28, here 22–23.

<sup>111</sup> For a groundbreaking description and analysis of life in the movement’s communes in Germany, see Kristina Dohrn, *Ethics and Practice in Communes Operated by the Gülen Movement* (German) (Berlin: Weißensee-Verlag, due for publication in 2014).

<sup>112</sup> Fethullah Gülen, “The Nature and Mission of the Light-houses” (Turkish), *fgulen.com* (= official Gülen website), 27 September 2001, <http://tr.fgulen.com/content/view/2628/3/> (accessed 20 November 2013).

ers are not here with me. They are the ones who will come when Islam is under attack from within and without; they will come forward and secure the message of God with moral virtue and exemplary behaviour. They are the longed-for ones.”<sup>113</sup> As a result, Gülen is regarded by his supporters as the anticipated renewer of faith,<sup>114</sup> and many consider his knowledge and preaching an expression of divine inspiration.<sup>115</sup>

The inner structure of the religious community can be viewed as a series of concentric circles.<sup>116</sup> The innermost circle, or core of the movement, whose older members (*abi* = elder brother) think along strongly conservative-national lines and avoid public political debate are connected directly with Fethullah Gülen. Its younger members, by contrast, behave in a far more outspoken and self-assertive manner, probably also because they are usually employed in the movement’s profit-making institutions. Among these are Ekrem Dumanlı, editor-in-chief of the daily newspaper *Zaman*, Mustafa Yeşil, President of the Journalists and Writers Foundation, and Rıza Nur Meral, CEO of TUSKON.<sup>117</sup> The older members fill the upper echelons of the community’s leadership clique, full time and on fixed salaries, and engage increasingly in controversial strategic debates with the younger representatives of this inner circle. The second circle consists of regional leaders who are appointed by the core of the movement. They are also responsible for the conceptualisation and development of new projects and institutions. As is the case in Turkish bureaucracy as a whole, the movement’s trademark organisational principles include the regular rotation of regional leaders and monitoring of their activities. The third and largest circle is formed of all those who are employed by or sympathisers of the Gülen network’s institutions. While Hakan Yavuz sees seamless transitions from supporter to permanently integrated member at the edge of the movement, where individual freedom of decision is possible, he comments that the two inner circles are characterised by a “military-like discipline”.

<sup>113</sup> M. Hakan Yavuz, *Toward an Islamic Enlightenment: The Gülen Movement* (Oxford, 2013), 71.

<sup>114</sup> Canlı, “A Delicate Connection” (see note 27), 89.

<sup>115</sup> Yavuz, *Toward an Islamic Enlightenment* (see note 113), 75.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. for the following *ibid.*, 86f. See also Dohrn, *Ethics and Practice in Communes Operated by the Gülen Movement* (see note 111), 65–70. A classification differentiated by discourse can be found in Pim Valkenberg’s work (who, for his part, refers to Bekim Agai), “The Intellectual Dimension of the Hizmet Movement”, in *Mapping the Gülen Movement*, ed. Çelik (see note 17), 33–4.

<sup>117</sup> Yavuz, *Toward an Islamic Enlightenment* (see note 113), 86.

However, he goes on to remark that, in recent years, decision-making authority has shifted increasingly to regional level, this triggered by the movement’s rapid growth and geographical expansion. As far as regional leaders are concerned, Yavuz concludes: “They have turned into virtual “baron-like” leaders rather than abis due to their control of huge funds and properties, including schools.”<sup>118</sup>

According to this, the Gülen movement constitutes a hierarchically-structured, religious community with a civil society mission and a pronounced politically creative drive. Its growth and social dynamic results from the tension between the desire to maintain a given religious identity and the striving for social advancement in a modern society. Its socio-political positions emanate from the forced secularisation and concomitant social marginalisation of pious members of the Turkish Republic on the one hand and a self-sought secularisation of the mindscapes of its members on the other.

The movement’s originally strict hierarchy is increasingly weakened, something which cannot only be attributed to the generation shift. Firstly, the movement has grown exceedingly swiftly and expanded to encompass a continually rising number of countries. This development went hand in hand with the integration of its supporters in a vast array of different professions and economic connections. Widely different economic and political interests finds increasingly strong expression in the wake of this trend. The movement’s cohesion would be unthinkable without its charismatic leader. However, the cohesion is secured by the benefits offered by the movement to its members in the form of its resources. Moreover, the political and economic attacks to which the movement in Turkey is subjected and the socio-political criticism it is experiencing in the USA and Europe are factors which cause its members to bond more strongly time and again. These circumstances explain why, in Turkey, activists within the movement’s educational institutions and pro-Gülen entrepreneurs, both of whom have no interest in conflicts with the government, remain loyal to the movement’s networks within the bureaucracy which seek direct political influ-

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87. The creation of such centres of power within the police force, which escape the control of the community leadership, is described by Hanefi Avcı in *Simons in the Golden Horn: Yesterday the State, Today the Gülen Community* (Turkish), (Ankara, 2010), 557ff.

ence.<sup>119</sup> But what is the significance of this analysis of the movement's structure in terms of its future within the European diaspora? And which recommendations for action can be formulated for decision-makers in Germany?

## Dealing with the Gülen Movement

### The parameters

All reflections regarding possible ways to deal with the movement must proceed from the recognition of several fundamental political and social parameters. This initially includes the realisation that each and every positioning of decision-makers in Germany relative to the movement will inevitably influence and help shape its further development here. The more marked defensive attitudes and the more meagre offers of cooperation are, the more likely it is that the movement's central governance and leadership mechanisms will be strengthened. Secondly, it is important to recall that all Islamic organisations, communities and currents in Germany legitimately recruit supporters, and that it is in the interests of German society to try and ensure that the young Muslim generation is steered along politically moderate paths, not radical ones or those where individuals are prepared to resort to violence. Thirdly, everything seems to suggest that the movement in the diaspora – unlike in Turkey itself – is not, and can never constitute, a significant political factor. The Gülen movement in Europe could only pose a “danger”, if at all, for individual members who submit to authoritarian structures. Meanwhile, nothing points to a direct compulsion to remain within these structures against one's will as yet. Fourthly, it must be emphasised once again that the external civil society activities of the movement in Germany, its commitment to the field of education and interfaith and intercultural dialogue, serve the integration of immigrants within German society – at least objectively. It would be absurd to refuse to collaborate with the group of Muslims in Germany who carry out integration work and themselves aspire to social advancement, be this religiously motivated or not.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. Ruşen Çakır in the daily newspaper *Vatan* published on 15 and 16 April 2012 and Ali Bayramoğlu in the *Vatan* edition of 23 February 2012.

### Challenges for the Gülen movement in the diaspora

Against the background of the diaspora, Gülen's philosophy of adopting modern knowledge, modes of action and attitudes, climbing the social ladder and thus making an effective contribution to social moral reform assumes a new dimension. For one thing, in contrast to Turkey, personal social advancement cannot be linked with the undertaking regarding the conquest of the state. For another, and again in contrast to Turkey, to concentrate on the preservation of one's traditional religious (Muslim) and national (Turkish) identity does not automatically create harmony with the majority of the population, but is indeed at least partially opposed to the same. As a result, the Turkish-Muslim diaspora is under pressure to develop a new understanding of religious and national identity compatible with attitudes prevailing in European societies. For the movement's supporters, this is just as much a prerequisite for their individual advancement as the reconciliation of their religious world view with its scientific equivalent. Gülen's prompt that service to society constitutes a significant form of a lifestyle justifiable in the eyes of God could prove to be the key to resolving the principal conflict of interest between Islam and the West both within the European diaspora and in the USA, repeatedly emphasised by him with insistence in his early writings. In actual fact, this is also the direction which the movement's social partners are working towards within the European diaspora. For in contrast to Central Asia, the Balkans and the USA, where the movement presented itself in the guise of Turkish “civil society expatriates” with largely prefabricated concepts for schools, universities and centres of dialogue and realised these plans within very short periods and frequently without significant assistance from the local population, the movement's activities within the Turkish European diaspora are dependent on the immigrants themselves.

And, in fact, in both the European diaspora and in the USA, the political and religious elements of Gülen's teachings which have proved dysfunctional in these societies, namely the nationalistic-authoritarian praise of Turkish culture, the state-centred, totalitarian aspects of Gülen's moral doctrines and the traditional traits of its understanding of Islam, are pushed into the background by the movement's members themselves with a meaningful silence.

So, in the Netherlands, it was noted that the movement did not react to the heightened mistrust which

greeted it as a result of the generally higher levels of scepticism towards Islam with retreat or even radicalisation, but instead demonstrated deeper commitment to the field of secular education. Student homes suspected by the public of propagating Islamic teachings were closed, and two schools founded within the framework of Dutch school networks, one of which was a Montessori school. In Belgium, the movement's educational model of excellence, the Lucerna school, regards itself as non-religious and non-denominational.<sup>120</sup> In the Federal Republic of Germany, the movement has not availed itself of its legal right to prescribe a specific pedagogical, religious or ideological curriculum for its private schools, instead adopting German syllabuses.

If we take note of all these changes, it appears improbable that, in the medium-term, the movement's existing central leadership mechanisms would succeed in prevailing over the interests of the immigrants in the event of a conflict of interest. This applies with even more pertinence to the era after Fethullah Gülen, of whom close sources report, off the record of course, that he is confronted with increasingly controversial interests within the movement's inner circle and is finding it more and more difficult to maintain balance and create an atmosphere of compromise.

As a result, decision-makers and institutions within Germany are usually well advised to collaborate with initiatives associated with the Gülen movement. At the same time, however, they should insist on internal organisational and financial transparency in each collaboration and strive to ensure that decisions are taken democratically. It is crucial to represent one's own position clearly as far as any debate on content is concerned. Nonetheless, a fundamental respect for religiosity should also be evident in cases in which the depth of the said piety may appear unsettling in the eyes of the strongly secularised German society.

## Abbreviations

AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)
ANAP	Anavatan Partisi (Motherland Party)
CHP	Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican People's Party)
DİB	Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı (Presidency of Religious Affairs)
DIK	Deutsche Islamkonferenz (German Islam Conference)
DİTİB	Diyanet İşleri Türk İslam Birliği (Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs)
DP	Demokrat Parti (Democratic Party)
DSP	Demokratik Sol Parti (Democratic Left Party)
DYP	Doğru Yol Partisi (Right Path Party)
FP	Fazilet Partisi (Virtue Party)
GES	Genelkurmay Elektronik Sistemler (Electronic Systems of the General Staff)
GYV	Gazeteciler ve Yazarlar Vakfı (Journalists and Writers Foundation)
HE	Halk Evleri (Community Centres)
HSYK	Hâkimler ve Savcılar Yüksek Kurulu (Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors)
IGMG	Islamische Gemeinschaft/Millî Görüş (Islamic Community National View)
IHH	İnsan Hak ve Hürriyetleri ve İnsani Yardım Vakfı (Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief)
IRD	İslamrat Deutschland (Islamic Council Germany)
KCK	Koma Civakên Kurdistan (Union of Communities in Kurdistan)
KMD	Komünizm Mücadele Derneği (Association for the Struggle against Communism)
KRM	Koordinationsrat der Muslime (Coordinating Council of Muslims)
MEB	Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı (Ministry of National Education)
MİT	Millî İstihbarat Teşkilâtı (National Intelligence Organisation)
MSP	Millî Selamet Partisi (National Salvation Party)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PKK	Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan (Kurdistan Workers' Party)
ÖYM	Özel Yetkili Mahkemeler (Court with Extraordinary Powers)
RP	Refah Partisi (Welfare Party)
SP	Saadet Partisi (Felicity Party)
TTK	Talim ve Terbiye Kurulu (Turkish Education Council)
TUSKON	Türkiye İşadamları ve Sanayiciler Konfederasyonu (Confederation of Turkish Businessmen and Industrialists)
VIKZ	Vereinigung Islamischer Kulturzentren (Association of Islamic Cultural Centres) (Germany)
ZMD	Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland (Central Council of Muslims in Germany)

<sup>120</sup> Leman, "The Flexible and Multilayered Character of the 'Hizmet' Movement in Immigration" (see note 94), *passim*.